This Month:

WITH this issue we are introducing a new department, called *Cross-Country*, which will contain first-hand accounts, sketches, descriptions of life in the United States today. The flavor of this type of material is often lost in news-reporting, while its immediacy cannot always be directly conveyed by fiction. The inexhaustible variety of experience in all parts of the country—people, events, occupations, and attitudes in their local setting—can become the subject of authentic writing that, in a sense, goes beyond formal literary limits and generalizations of a political and critical nature. Readers and writers are urged to contribute.

JOHN DOS PASSOS's story of the steel strike in this issue is a part of his novel, *The Big Money*, scheduled to appear this fall.

PAUL ENGLE's article stating his attitude toward poetry and politics is his first public statement in an American magazine. He is now at Oxford, England, on a Rhodes scholarship.

SAUL LEVITT's *May Days* is a part of his first novel, which he has just completed.

PRUDENCIO DE PEREDA's story in our March number, *The Runners*, was praised in many letters from readers.

NORMAN ROSS is 22 years old, and a graduate of Brooklyn College. *New Calendars* is his first published poem.

JOHN HERRMANN, author of two novels, *What Happens* and *Summer is Ended*, as well as those memorable long stories, *Engagement* and *The Big Short Trip*, is now at work on a new novel dealing with his recent experiences among farmers and workers in the Middle West.

STANLEY J. KUNITZ is completing his second book of poems. *Intellectual Things* is the title of his first book.

JOHN MULLEN's sketches of steel towns have been printed in the *New Masses*, *American Mercury* and *American Spectator*. He has worked in steel towns as a union organizer.

SYDNEY JUSTIN HARRIS is a Chicago newspaperman at present writing a novel.

HORACE GREGORY is now completing a book of literary criticism. His volumes of poetry include *Chelsea Rooming House*, *No Retreat*, *Chorus for Survival* and a translation of Catullus.

CLARENCE WEINSTOCK is an editor of *Art Front*.

In the June Issue:

THE POET OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, an essay on Walt Whitman by *Dmitri Mirsky*.

FROM A CRITIC'S DIARY, by *Philip Rahv*.

FREUD AND MODERN LITERATURE, by *William Phillips*.

CONTENTS

VOLUME III MAY 1936 NUMBER 4

GUS	*John Dos Passos*	3
HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD	*Paul Engle*	8
THE SLEEPERS	*James Neugass*	9
MAY DAYS	*Saul Levitt*	9
IN ASTURIAS	*Prudencio de Pereda*	12
NEW CALENDARS	*Norman Ross*	14
A LAST LOOK BACK	*John Herrmann*	15
TWO POEMS	*Stanley J. Kunitz*	19
MACLEISH AND PROLETARIAN POETRY	*Alan Calmer*	19
THESE DEAD	*Edward J. Fitzgerald*	21
Cross-Country		
Al and the Chief	*John Mullen*	22
A Letter from Chicago	*Sydney Justin Harris*	23
Theatre Chronicle	*James T. Farrell*	25
Books:		
Dixie Idyll	*William Phillips*	26
Variety	*Horace Gregory*	27
	Genevieve Taggard	28
	Clarence Weinstock	29
Correspondence		30

PARTISAN REVIEW AND ANVIL is published monthly at 430 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Subscriptions $1.00 for 10 issues; foreign rates, $1.50. Copyright by PARTISAN REVIEW AND ANVIL. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes.

Editors: ALAN CALMER, JACK CONROY, BEN FIELD, WILLIAM PHILLIPS, PHILIP RAHV, CLINTON SIMPSON.

Associates: NELSON ALGREN, J. S. BALCH, ERSKINE CALDWELL, KENNETH FEARING, ALFRED HAYES, JOSEPH KALAR, MERIDEL LE SUEUR, H. H. LEWIS, SAMUEL PUTNAM, EDWIN ROLFE, HOWARD RUSHMORE, EDWIN SEAVER, WALTER SNOW, WILL WHARTON, RICHARD WRIGHT.

Designed by ROBERT JOSEPHY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Partisan Review & Anvil

MAY
1936

Gus

JOHN DOS PASSOS

MARY FRENCH got into Pittsburgh late on a summer afternoon. Crossing the bridge she had a glimpse of the level sunlight glowing pink and orange on a confusion of metalcolored smokes from a wilderness of chimneys ranked about the huge corrugated iron structures along the riverbank. Then she was getting out into the brownish dark gloom of the station with her suitcase cutting into her hand.

She called up Lois Speyer from a dirty phonebooth that smelled of cigarsmoke. "Mary French, how lovely!" said her friend in her comical burbling voice. "I'll get you a room right here at Mrs. Gansemeyer's, come on out to supper. It's a boardinghouse. Just wait till you see it. . . . But I just can't imagine anybody coming to Pittsburgh for their vacation."

Mary found herself getting red and nervous right there in the phonebooth. "I wanted to see something different from the socialworker angle."

"Well it's so nice the idea of having somebody to talk to that I hope it doesn't mean you've lost your mind. . . . You know they don't employ Vassar graduates in the openhearth furnaces."

"I'm not a Vassar graduate," Mary French shouted into the receiver feeling the near tears stinging her eyes. "I'm just like any other working girl. . . . You ought to have seen me working in that cafeteria in Cleveland."

"Well come on out Mary darling, I'll save some supper for you."

It was a long ride out on the streetcar. Pittsburgh was grim all right.

Next day she went around to the employment offices of several of the steel companies. When she said she'd been a socialworker they looked at her awful funny. Nothing doing; not taking on clerical or secretarial workers now. She spent days with the newspapers answering helpwanted ads. Lois Speyer certainly laughed in that longfaced sarcastic way she had when Mary had to take a job on the *Times-Sentinel* that Lois had gotten her because she knew the girl who wrote the society column.

As the Pittsburgh summer, hot and choky with coal gas and the strangling fumes from blast furnaces, blooming mills, rolling mills that clogged the huge smoking "Y" of the rivers, dragged into August, there began to be talk around the office of red agitators getting into the mills and fomenting a strike. A certain Mr. Gorman, said to be one of the head operatives for the Sherman Service, was often seen smoking a cigar in the managing editor's office. The paper began to fill up with news of alien riots and Russian Bolshevists and the nationalization of women and the defeat of Lenin and Trotsky.

Then one afternoon in early September Mr. Healy called Mary French into his private office and asked her to sit down. When he went over and closed the door tight Mary thought for a second he was going to make indecent proposals to her, but instead he said in his most tired fatherly manner, "Now Miss French I have an assignment for you that I don't want you to take unless you really want to. I've got a daughter myself and I hope when she grows up she'll be a nice simple well-brought up girl like you are. So honestly if I thought it was demeaning I wouldn't ask you to do it . . . you know that. We're strictly the family newspaper . . . we let the other fellers pull the rough stuff. . . . You know, an item never goes through my desk that I don't think of my own wife and daughters, how I'd like to have them read it."

Ted Healy was a large round blackhaired man with a rolling grey eye like a codfish's eye. "What's the story, Mr. Healy?" asked Mary briskly; she'd made up her mind it must be something about the white slave traffic. "Well these damned agitators, you know they're trying to start a strike. . . . Well they've opened a publicity office downtown. I'm scared to send one of the boys down . . . might get into some trouble with those gorillas. . . . I don't want a dead reporter on my front page. . . . But sending you down. . . . You know you're not working for a paper you're a socialservice worker, want to get both sides of the story. . . . A sweet innocent looking girl can't possibly come to any harm. . . . Well I want to get the lowdown on the people working there . . . what part of Russia they were born in, how they got into this country in the first place . . . where the money comes from . . . prison records, you know. . . . Get all the dope you can. It'll make a magnificent Sunday feature."

"I'm very much interested in industrial relations . . . it's a wonderful assignment. . . . But Mr. Healy aren't conditions pretty bad in the mills?"

Mr. Healy jumped to his feet and began striding up and down the office. "I've got all the dope on that. . . . Those damn hunkies are makin' more money than they ever made in their lives, they buy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stocks, they buy washingmachines and silk stockings for their women and they send money back to the old folks. While our boys were risking their lives in the trenches, they held down all the good jobs and most of 'em are enemy aliens at that. Those hunkies are well off, don't you forget it. . . . I don't hold it against the poor devils of hunkies, they're just ignorant; but those birds who accept the hospitality of our country and then go around spreading their devilish red propaganda . . . well all I can say is, shooting's too good for 'em." Mr. Healy was red in the face. A boy in a green eyeshade burst in with a big bunch of flimsy. Mary French got to her feet. "I'll get right after it, Mr. Healy," she said.

She got off the car at the wrong corner and stumbled up the uneven pavement of a steep broad cobbled street of little jimcrack stores poolrooms barbershops and Italian spaghetti parlors. A gusty wind blew dust and excelsior and old papers. Outside of an unpainted doorway foreignlooking men stood talking in low voices in knots of two or three. Before she could get up her nerve to go up the long steep dirty narrow stairs she looked for a minute into the photographer's window at the tinted enlargements of babies with too-pink cheeks and family groups and the ramrodstiff bridal couples. At the head of the stairs she paused in the littered hall. From offices on both sides came a sound of typing and deep voices. She was still hesitantly moving forward when she ran into a young man in the dark. "Hello," he said in a gruff voice she liked. "Are you the lady from New York?"

"Not exactly, I'm from Colorado."

"There was a lady from New York coming to help us with some publicity. I thought maybe you was her."

"That's just what I came for."

"Come in, I'm just Gus Moscowski. I'm kinder the office boy." He opened one of the closed doors for her into a small dusty office piled with stacked-up papers and filled up with a large table covered with clippings at which two young men in glasses sat in their shirtsleeves. "Here are the regular guys." All the time she was talking to the others she couldn't keep her eyes off him. He had blond close-cropped hair and very blue eyes and a big bearcub look in his cheap serge suit shiny at the elbows and knees. The young men answered her questions so politely that she couldn't help telling them she was trying to do a feature story for the *Times-Sentinel.* They laughed their heads off.

"But Mr. Healy said he wanted a fair well-rounded picture. He just thinks the men are being misled." Mary found herself laughing too.

"Gus," said the older man, "you take this young lady around and show her some of the sights. . . . After all Ted Healy may have lost his mind. First here's what Ted Healy's friends did to Fanny Sellers."

She couldn't look at the photograph that he poked under her nose. "What had she done?"

"Tried to organize the working class, that's the worst crime you can commit in this man's country."

It was a relief to be out on the street again, hurrying along while Gus Moscowski shambled grinning beside her. "Well I guess I'd better take you first to see how folks live on forty-two cents an hour. Too bad you can't talk Polish. I'm a Polack myself."

"You must have been born in this country."

"Sure, highschool graduate. If I can get the dough I want to take engineering at Carnegie Tech. . . . I dunno why I string along with these damn Polacks." He looked her straight in the face and grinned when he said that.

She smiled back at him. "I understand why," she said.

He made a gesture with his elbow as they turned a corner past a group of ragged kids making mudpies; they were pale flabby filthy little kids with pouches under their eyes. Mary turned her eyes away but she'd seen them, as she'd seen the photograph of the dead woman with her head caved in. "Get an eyeful of cesspool alley, the land of opportunity," Gus Moscowski said way down in his throat.

That night when she got off the streetcar at the corner nearest Mrs. Gansemeyer's her legs were trembling and the small of her back ached. She went right up to her room and hurried into bed. She was too tired to eat or to sit up listening to Lois Speyer's line of sarcastic gossip. She couldn't sleep. She lay in her sagging bed listening to the voices of the boarders rocking on the porch below and to the hooting of engines and the clank of shunted freight-cars down in the valley, seeing again the shapeless broken shoes and the worn hands folded over dirty aprons and the sharp anxious beadiness of women's eyes, feeling the quake underfoot of the crazy stairways zigzagging up and down the hills black and bare as slagpiles where the steelworkers lived in jumbled shanties and big black rows of smokegnawed clapboarded houses, in her nose the stench of cranky backhouses and kitchens with cabbage cooking and clothes boiling and unwashed children and drying diapers. She slept by fits and starts and would wake up with Gus Moscowski's warm tough voice in her head, and her whole body tingling with the hard fuzzy bearcub feel of him when his arms brushed against her arm or he put out his big hand to steady her at a place where the boardwalk had broken through and she'd started to slip in the loose shaly slide underneath. When she fell solidly asleep she went on dreaming about him. She woke up early feeling happy because she was going to meet him again right after breakfast.

That afternoon she went back to the office to write the piece. Just like Mr. Healy had said, she put in all she could find out about the boys running the publicity bureau. The nearest to Russia any of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them came from was Canarsie, Long Island. She tried to get in both sides of the question, even called them "possibly misguided."

About a minute after she'd sent it in to the Sunday editor she was called to the city desk. Ted Healy had on a green eyeshade and was bent over a swirl of galleys. Mary could see her copy on top of the pile of flimsy under his elbow. The Sunday editor had scrawled across the top of it in red pencil: "Why wish this on me?"

"Well young lady," he said without looking up, "you've written a first rate propaganda piece for the *Nation* or some other parlor pink sheet in New York, but what the devil do you think we can do with it? This is Pittsburgh." He got to his feet and held out his hand. "Goodby Miss French, I wish I had some way of using you because you're a mighty smart girl . . . and smart girl reporters are rare. . . . I've sent your slip to the cashier. . . . "

Before Mary French could get her breath she was out on the pavement with an extra week's salary in her pocketbook, which after all was pretty white of old Ted Healy. That night Lois Speyer looked aghast when Mary told her she'd been fired, but when Mary told Lois that she'd gone down and gotten a job doing publicity for the Amalgamated, Lois burst into tears.

"I said you'd lost your mind and it's true. . . . Either I'll have to move out of this boarding house or you will . . . and I won't be able to go around with you like I've been doing."

"How ridiculous, Lois."

"Darling you don't know Pittsburgh. I don't care about those miserable strikers but I absolutely have got to hold onto my job. . . . You know I just have to send money home. . . . Oh we were just beginning to have such fun and now you have to go and spoil everything."

"If you'd seen what I've seen you'd talk differently," said Mary French coldly. They were never very good friends again after that.

Gus Moscowski found her a room with heavy lace curtains in the windows in the house of a Polish storekeeper who was a cousin of his father's. He escorted her solemnly back there from the office nights when they worked late, and they always did work late.

Mary French had never worked so hard in her life. She wrote releases, got up statistics on "t.b.", undernourished children, sanitary conditions, crime, took trips on interurban trolleys and slow locals to Rankin and Braddock and Homestead an Bessemer and as far as Youngstown and Steubenville and Gary, took notes on speeches of Foster and Fitzpatrick, saw meetings broken up and the troopers in their darkgrey uniforms moving in a line down the unpaved alleys of company patches, beating up men and women with their clubs, kicking children out of their way, chasing old men off their front stoops. "And to think," said Gus of the troopers, "that the sonsobitches are lousy Polacks themselves most of 'em. Now ain't that just like a Polack?"

She interviewed metropolitan newspapermen, spent hours trying to wheedle A.P. and U.P. men into sending straight stories, smoothed out the grammar in the English language leaflets. The fall flew by before she knew it. The Amalgamated could only pay the barest expenses, her clothes were in awful shape, there was no curl in her hair, at night she couldn't sleep for the memory of the things she'd seen, the jailings, the bloody heads, the pathetic wreck of some family's parlor, sofa cut open, chairs smashed, chinacloset hacked to pieces with an axe, after the troopers had been through looking for "literature." She hardly knew herself when she looked at her face in the greenspotted giltframed mirror over the washstand as she hurriedly dressed in the morning. She had a haggard desperate look. She was beginning to look like a striker herself.

She hardly knew herself, either, when Gus's voice gave her cold shivers, or when whether she felt good or not that day depended on how often he smiled when he spoke to her; it didn't seem like herself at all the way that whenever her mind was free for a moment, she began to imagine him coming close to her, putting his arms around her, his lips, his big hard hands. When that feeling came on she would have to close her eyes for a second and would feel herself dizzily reeling. Then she'd force her eyes open and fly at her typing and after a while would feel cool and clear again.

The day Mary French admitted to herself for the first time that the highpaid workers weren't coming out and that the lowpaid workers were going to lose their strike she hardly dared look Gus in the face when he called for her to take her home. It was a muggy drizzly outofseason November night. As they walked along the street without saying anything the fog suddenly glowed red in the direction of the mills. "There they go," said Gus. The glow grew and grew, first pink then orange. Mary nodded and said nothing. "What can you do when the woiking-class won't stick together. Every kind of damn foreigner thinks the others is bums and the 'mericans they think everybody's a bum except you an' me. Wasn't so long ago we was all foreigners in this man's country. Christ, I dunno why I string along wid 'em."

"Gus what would you do if we lost the strike? I mean you personally."

"I'll be on the black books all right. Means I couldn't get me another job in the metaltrades, not if I was the last guy on earth. . . . Hell, I dunno. Take a false name an' join the Navy, I guess. They say a guy kin get a real good eddication in the Navy."

"I guess we oughtn't to talk about it. . . . Me, I don't know what I'll do."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You kin go anywheres and git a job on a paper like you had. . . . I wish I had your schoolin'. . . . I bet you'll be glad to be quit of this bunch of hunkies."

"They are the working class, Gus."

"Sure if we could only git more sense into our damn heads. . . . You know I've got an own brother scabbin' right to this day."

"He's probably worried about his wife and family."

"I'd worry him if I could get my hands on him. . . . A woikin' man ain't got no right to have a wife and family."

"He can have a girl." Her voice failed. She felt her heart beating so hard as she walked along beside him over the uneven pavement she was afraid he'd hear it.

"Girls aplenty." Gus laughed. "They're free and easy, Polish girls are. That's one good thing."

"I wish. . . ." Mary heard her voice saying.

"Well good night. Rest good, you look all in." He'd given her a pat on the shoulder and he'd turned and gone off with his long shambling stride. She was at the door of her house. When she got in her room she threw herself on the bed and cried.

It was several weeks later that Gus Moscowski was arrested distributing leaflets in Braddock. She saw him brought up before the squire in the dirty courtroom crowded with the grey uniforms of state troopers and sentenced to five years. His arm was in a sling and there was a scab of clotted blood on the towy stubble on the back of his head. His blue eyes caught hers in the crowd and he grinned and gave her a jaunty wave of a big hand.

"So that's how it is, is it?" snarled a voice beside her. There was a hulking grey trooper on either side of her. They hustled her out of court and marched her down to the interurban trolleystop talking filth at her all the way. She didn't say anything but she couldn't keep back the tears. She hadn't known men could talk to women like that. "Come on now, loosen up, me an Steve here we're twice the men. You ought to have better sense. . . . No money in that guy. . . ."

At last the Pittsburgh trolley came and they put her on it with a warning that if they ever saw her around again they'd have her up for soliciting. As the car pulled out she saw them turn away laughing. She sat there hunched up in the seat in the back of the car with her stomach churning and her face set. Back at the office, all she said was that the cossacks had run her out of the courthouse.

When she heard that George Barrow was in town with the Senatorial Investigating Commission, she went to him at once. She waited for him in the lobby of the Schenley. The still winter evening was one block of black iron cold. She was shivering in her thin coat. She was dead tired. It seemed weeks since she'd slept.

It was warm in the big quiet hotel lobby, through her thin paper soles she could feel the thick nap of the carpet. There must have been a bridge party somewhere in the hotel because groups of welldressed middleaged women that reminded her of her mother kept going through the lobby. She let herself drop into a deep chair by a radiator and started at once to drowse off.

"You poor little girl I can see you've been working. . . . This is different from social service work I'll bet." She opened her eyes. George Barrow had on a furlined coat with a fur collar out of which his thin neck and long knobby face stuck comically like the head of a maribou stork.

She got up. "Oh Mr. Barrow . . . I mean George." He took her hand in his left hand and patted it gently with his right. "Now I know what the front line trenches are like," she said laughing at his kind comical look.

"You're laughing at my fur coat. . . . Wouldn't help the Amalgamated if I got pneumonia, would it? . . . Why haven't you got a warm coat? . . . Sweet little Mary French. . . . Just exactly the person I wanted to see. . . . Do you mind if we go upstairs? I don't like to talk here, too many eavesdroppers."

Upstairs in his ample warm room with pink hangings and pink lights he helped her off with her coat. He stood there frowning and weighing it in his hand. "You've got to get a warm coat," he said. After he'd ordered tea for her from the waiter he rather ostentatiously left the door into the hall open. They settled down on either side of a little table at the foot of the bed that was littered with newspapers and typewritten sheets. "Well well well," he said. "This is a great pleasure for a lonely old codger like me. What would you think of having dinner with the Senator? . . . To see how the other half lives."

They talked and talked. Now and then he slipped a little whiskey in her tea. He was very kind, said he was sure all the boys could be gotten out of jail as soon as the strike was settled and that it virtually was settled. He'd just been over in Youngstown talking to Fitzpatrick. He thought he'd just about convinced him that the only thing to do was to get the men back to work. He had Judge Gary's own private assurance that nobody would be discriminated against and that experts were working on the problem of an eight hour day. As soon as the technical difficulties could be overcome, the whole picture of the steel workers' life would change radically for the better. Then and there he offered to put Mary French on the payroll as his secretary. He said her actual experience with conditions would be invaluable in influencing legislation. If the great effort of the underpaid steelworkers wasn't to be lost it would have to be incorporated in legislation. The center of the fight was moving to Washington. He felt the time was ripe in the senate.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She said her first obligation was to the strike committee.

"But my dear sweet child," George said gently patting the back of her hand, "in a few days there won't be any strike committee."

The Senator was a southerner with irongrey hair and white spats who looked at Mary French when he first came in the room as if he thought she was going to plant a bomb under the big bulge of his creamcolored vest, but his fatherly respectful delicate flowerofwomanhood manner was soothing. They ordered dinner brought up to George's room. The Senator kidded George in a heavy orotund way about his dangerous Bolsheviki friends. They'd been putting away a good deal of rye and the smoky air of George's room was rich with whiskey. When she left them to go down to the office again George and the Senator were talking about taking in a burlesque show.

The bunch down at the office looked haggard and sour. When she told them about George Barrow's offer they told her to jump at it; of course it would be wonderful to have her working for them in Washington and besides they wouldn't be able to pay even her expenses any more. She finished her release and glumly said goodnight. That night she slept better than she had for weeks though all the way home she was haunted by Gus Moscowski's blue eyes and his fair head with the blood clotted on it and his jaunty grin when his eyes met hers in the courtroom. She had decided that the best way to get the boys out of jail was to go to Washington with George.

Next morning George called her up at the office first thing and asked her what about the job. She said she'd take it. He said would fifty a week be all right; maybe he could raise it to seventy-five later. She said it was more than she'd ever made in her life. He said he wanted her to come right around to the Schenley; he had something important for her to do. When she got there he met her in the lobby with a hundred-dollar bill in his hand. "The first thing I want you to do, sweet girl, is to go buy yourself a warm overcoat. Here's two weeks' salary in advance. . . . You won't be any good to me as a secretary if you catch your death of pneumonia the first day."

On the parlorcar going to Washington he handed over to her two big square black suitcases full of testimony. "Don't think for a moment there's no work connected with this job," he said fishing out manila envelope after manila envelope full of closelytyped stenographers' notes on onionskin paper. "The other stuff was more romantic," he said sharpening a pencil, "but this in the long range view is more useful."

"I wonder," said Mary.

"Mary dear you are very young . . . and very sweet." He sat back in his green plush armchair looking at her a long time with his bulging eyes while the snowy hills filed by outside splotched with the green of lichened rocks and laced black with bare branches of trees.

He began to talk about how marriage ought to be an absolutely free union of lovers to last as long as they loved and respected each other and no longer, and that the only reason for legalizing it in the eyes of the world was convenience, like getting a passport to travel in foreign countries. Then he said wouldn't it be fun if they got married when they got to Washington. She shook her head and went back to the problem of strikers' defense but she couldn't help smiling at him when she said she didn't want to get married just yet; he'd been so kind. She felt he was a real friend.

In Washington she fixed herself up a little apartment in a house on "H" Street that was being sublet cheap by Democratic officeholders who were moving out. She often cooked supper for George there. She'd never done any cooking before except camp cooking, but George was quite an expert and knew how to make Italian spaghetti and chili con carne and oyster stew and real French boillabaisse. He'd get wine from the Roumanian Embassy and they'd have very cosy meals together after long days working in the office. He talked and talked about love and the importance of a healthy sexlife for men and women, so that at last she let him. He was so tender and gentle that for a while she thought maybe she really loved him. He knew all about contraceptives and was very nice and humorous about them. Sleeping with a man didn't make as much difference in her life as she'd expected it would.

The day after Harding's inauguration two seedy looking men in shapeless grey caps shuffled up to her in the lobby of the little building on "G" Street where George's office was. One of them was Gus Moscowski. His cheeks were hollow and he looked tired and dirty. "Hello Miss French," he said. "Meet the kid brother . . .not the one that scabbed, this one's on the up and up. . . . You sure do look well."

"Oh Gus they let you out."

He nodded. "New trial, cases dismissed. . . . But I tell you, it's no fun in that cooler."

She took them up to George's office. "I'm sure Mr. Barrow 'll want to get firsthand news of the steelworkers."

Gus made a gesture of pushing something away with his hand. "We ain't steelworkers, we're bums. . . . Your friends the senators sure sold us out pretty. Every sonofabitch ever walked across the street with a striker 's blacklisted. The old man got his job back, way back at fifty cents instead of a dollar ten after the priest made him kiss the book and promise not to join the union. . . . Lots of people goin' back to the old country. Me an' the kid, we pulled out, went down to Baltimore to git a job on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a boat somewheres but the seamen are piled up ten deep on the wharf. . . . So we thought we might as well take in the inauguration and see how the fat boys looked."

Mary tried to get them to take some money but they shook their heads and Gus said, "We didn't come for a handout." They were just going when George came in. He didn't seem any too pleased to see them and began to lecture them on violence; if the strikers hadn't threatened violence and allowed themselves to be misled by a lot of Bolshevik agitators, the men who were really negotiating a settlement from the inside would have been able to get them much better terms. "I won't argue with you Mr. Barrow. I suppose you think Father Kaslick was a red and that it was Fanny Sellers that bashed in the head of a state trooper. An' then you say you're on the side of the woikin' man."

"And George, even the Senate committee admitted that the violence was by the deputies and state troopers. . . . I saw it myself after all," said Mary, flushing.

"Of course boys. . . . I know what you're up against. . . . I hold no brief for the Steel Trust. . . . But Mary, what I want to impress on these boys is that the working man is often his own worst enemy in these things."

"The woikin' man gets rooked whatever way you look at it," said Gus, "and I don't know whether it's his friends or his enemies does the worst rookin'. . . . Well we got to git a move on."

"Boys, I'm sorry I've got so much pressing business to do. I'd like to hear about your experiences. Maybe some other time," said George settling down at his desk.

As they left, Mary French followed them to the door and whispered to Gus, "And what about Carnegie Tech?" His eyes didn't seem so blue as they'd seemed before he went to jail. "Well what about it?" said Gus with a stiff unsmiling face and slammed the groundglass door behind him.

Home Thoughts from Abroad

PAUL ENGLE

MY NEW book of poems, *Break the Heart's Anger,** is not, as my book, *American Song,* was, solely about California, Vienna, Chicago, New York, the Great Steppes of Russia and the Great Valley of the Mississippi. It's a book about places I've been and things I've seen.

Some people reading it may wonder again why modern poets talk about so many things they aren't used to finding in poetry. I mean such things as men and jobs and social problems. I don't mean skyscrapers and machinery as romantic objects because they have already been accepted in poetry. I am more interested in the people who had the job of building them, and in those who couldn't get the job. This is not so remote from poetry as one may think, and especially from American poetry, for the men who have worked in America have been the people who made our songs. In England, the history of the railroads is just a chapter in the industrial revolution, but with us it's a volume of songs. And there's no reason why the biggest thing we are building today —a society—shouldn't also be written as song, even though it is also being written up as politics in the newspaper headlines.

The farm laborer that Wordsworth wrote about was what he was because behind him were the Enclosure Acts. To understand the men and women we write about today, we must also understand the laws that have helped to shape them. We must be interested in the Tennessee Valley Authority, because, whether it is a success or failure, the men it will make or break will be the subject of our poems. I feel certain that if Shelley were living in America today he would be writing visions not of a new Greece but of a new America.

I have been away from America three years, long enough to find out what people over here are thinking. I've found with surprise that a lot of things they're thinking are what we are thinking too.

In Vienna, in Berlin, in Paris I've talked to as many people as I could. And they are worried about the same things we're worried about. And it seems to me, having seen them, that it is impossible today, if a man have any pity, to write what used to be called "pure poetry".

The English poets realise this. I have talked to them, to W. H. Auden, Cecil Day Lewis, Stephen Spender. They too feel the heartlessness and the uncertainty of their lives. And they feel also that never has there been between English and American writers so great a unity. This unity is no mystery. It's the same kind of disappointment; they are asking the same questions, however differently they may answer them.

In America, many writers met last year at a congress, with most other countries represented by delegates or by word. It may be the most important thing that has happened in American writing for years. It is a large unanimity of opinion, and that opinion is one that lives in Europe too. An English poet in Gloucestershire writes of the same hope as

* Reviewed by Genevieve Taggard on page 28 of this issue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an American poet in Illinois, as a French poet in Paris, as a German poet exiled in London, as a Russian poet in Leningrad.

How can poets ignore the movement of their time when that very movement may destroy them? It may have been possible in the old days for poets to remain aloof. Today, nations are so highly organized that no man, artist or worker, can avoid being deeply affected even at a change of government. In these days of universal conscription, the passing of an armament bill at Washington or Westminster is our business, because it may wholly determine our life, or end it. And economics—it is one of the purposes of my book to show that they are like the rain, the poet must drink both, and be restless until he finds their source. How can we humanly avoid writing poems that condemn some governments, when those same governments beat, exile and condemn their own poets? Must we not fight against that fascist force, lest it come to our land, and kill or exile us? When a world is madly arming, when its military appropriations are more than its appropriations for relief, when it spends more for death than for life, must we not feel and write indignation and even fear?

Poets have come down out of the ivory tower. It may be for no other reason than that we are hungry. But here we are—mingling with with all men and women. Our poems, even when they complain or call a society to question, or cry struggle, are not bad temper or whining, but the hard and honest expression of a belief that the world's agony and conflict are ours, that it is either our death or that of chaotic and crumbling society, that we can have, not so much a new life but any life at all, only in a new order.

In Europe they think this, and they turn to you, saying—America, can you show us the way? Can you send us nothing more than the Gulf Stream and the West Wind?

The Sleepers

Heavy-lidded heroes of the subways, the late cafeterias,
The sun-up streetcars, the sleepy doorways and stoops—
Star-boarders of the brake-rods, docks, and worn park lawns,
Round-shouldered veterans of the double-barreled subways,
Shot tired to work, and fired sleepy home back to sleep—
Sleepers, sleepers: this is the ninth inning, the last act.
Get up. Take a deep long breath. This is the end of the line,
This is the jumping-off place, here is where the sidewalk ends,
Here is the depot the ashpile the roundhouse the terminus.
Get up. Give us the Answer. We want to hear. Let us know.

JAMES NEUGASS

May Days

SAUL LEVITT

"AH, NOW watch this," he said, and she smiled, watching him. She sank down on the grass watching while he threw the stone, and he threw it straight at the cracked breast of the nymph over the fountain in Pelham Bay Park.

"Beating women," said Helen, smoothing the blue polka-dot dress.

"Sure, beat them and slaughter them," answered the dark-haired young fellow, sitting down next to her, and he hummed the Comintern song and thoughtfully twisted and twisted her hair. It had a straw toughness under his hand.

Pelham Bay Park was green and quiet in May. A small boy ran yelling along the path past the fountain; and over the fountain hung the stone nymphs discolored by wind and weather, with one nymph turned Amazon, one-breasted, the other breast cracked. Wind through the trees in the small stretch of woods.

"Father Divine's group," said Harry. "Those women singing, it was impressive. Dressed in white and singing. I can't remember the songs but they were swell. . . ." He grinned reminiscently, remembering the old man's opera songs. "I've learned to like that kind of music but not any other kind. . . . Our songs are nice, too," he amended.

"Do you remember when I ran off, Harry?" said Helen. "That was because I saw some of the girls I worked with in the millinery store. It was fun meeting them on May Day, I never expected to find them *there*. . . . Stop twisting my hair that way."

He kept twisting it absently and affectionately.

"And going past Twenty-first Street," he said. "I've worked there, and Eighteenth, too. I could look down and see the store, Schenk's place, where I had to do everything and wheel that handtruck out on Seventh Avenue. That job on Eighteenth Street, though, that was the damnedest job. It gave me the queerest kind of feeling, going down Seventh past landmarks like that, and fellows pressing against windows and looking out. One truck-driver getting stuck on Eighteenth, I don't think you saw him, Helen, he was stuck there waiting for the crowd and got down, sore as a bitch, and then sort of calmed down, watching. . . . You could see he was wondering."

She jabbed him, he let go of her hair and grabbed her and slid his hands along her back.

"Idiot!" she said, standing up and straightening her dress, her cheeks mantling a little.

He sat on the ground, the white shirt muddy along the rolled-up sleeves. It was warm enough

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

today to take off jacket and tie. He slung the jacket over his shoulder and they went along through the little stretch of woods and out on the open lawns with the grass beginning to grow tall, and down toward the Sound, like a blue pond ahead. They ran a little, they walked, and when he ran behind her, his eyes fell irresistibly toward her hips forming under the thin cloth: he caught up with her and got his arm around her waist. When he was ahead of her, he heard her feet on the gravel as she came up to him and held on to him for a moment.

He had felt like getting here today after the hard winter's work at the Section. Spring day along the shore. So he'd called Helen.

They reached the shore, roughing each other in the Spring way of roughing, and sat on the bench on the concrete walk at the Bay and talked. He said to her, "Do you know what that is on the other side? That's China. . . .

"China," he said again, and was still for seconds, with his hands on his chin, elbows on knees and staring out over the Sound, over the low blue water with the sailboats heeling over and the planes testing up above, and he stared at Helen, the massed golden-brown hair, her eyes laughing and laughing. Gray. High cloudless sky. Dimitroff free on May Day in Moscow, free now in Soviet Russia under a sky like this, free and fighting and forever free. The South Bronx, organizing down there, the wreaths for the dead in the doorways of the Irish brownstone houses on 140th Street framed in snow, and snow on the power-house walls. Dimitroff in the dock at Leipzig. They couldn't hold him. He looked at Helen quizzically as if about to say something. . . .

"Well," she said.

"Ever since that National Training School," he said, "I've begun to think that maybe I have a job right here at the Section. Last year I looked for work and came down to the Section evenings, but I'd like to forget about a job and just work down there, though I need a little money. . . . What would you say if it happened that I became a full-time functionary in the Party?"

"I think it would be grand," she said. "Si thinks it's just the thing for you, you're cut out for it."

"I was down to the District three weeks ago," he said, and she could see that he was holding in a lot of joy.

"There's plenty to do everywhere, and there's a chance for some of us here to go out and rake the surface, y'see, start the ball rolling for a united front party, and while I just talked it over with Si downtown, well, I think I could go. . . . But, you see, I don't want to leave New York particularly, I think there's plenty to do here. . . . Anyway, after the Seventh World Congress."

Water rolling up on the shore, and he could remember coming here as a boy, summer after summer. He told her about the time he had scrambled in over the side of the cabin cruiser in his cotton bathing suit, and the parties on the lawns and under the trees, Charley Abramson's and Irving's and Benny's families going up and spreading lunches, and Helen remembered coming up once or twice, too. That had been after the War, and thinking about it now it seemed even farther back. Mid-afternoon over the Sound, today he felt bound to remember this, to do exactly this, sit on the bench across from the green tongue he had called China when first he walked along here, holding his father's hand—sit here and remember that childhood during and after the War. Overhead were the trees and the hot sky shining down over the families spreading lunches on the grass, fragrance of face powder, the pungent smell of hard-boiled eggs out of wrappers. The fathers after the lunch sleeping or talking, their voices deep and wise as they talked politics and the War and work. He and other boys ran away from all the old, wise voices, to go down and live their childhood fiercely with hands and feet and eyes. The voices, the laughter of young mothers, 1919, 1920, 1921, enormously distant. Rice Stadium, the stone steps silent. He ran up those steps one hot day to the very top, and up at the top his heart pounded, sweat streamed into his eyes. . . .

"Would you go with me if I were to leave New York?" he asked suddenly.

The color came into her full, round face with its skin toned to the color of her hair, the faintest tinge of brown, showing darker now. "Why, Harry"—laughing—"Harry!" and letting his arm slide up to her breast. They looked at each other. "Blue," he said softly. "Blue, that's your color. . . . God, think of that, I'm beginning to feel that I'm in, in for life, nothing else, no running after anything anymore—"

"I know that, I know what that means, Harry! I remember an evening almost two years ago, deciding something and it does something to you—"

"And Sam," he said, "Sam told me about going down to Washington in 1932 just a scared kid."

The marvelous thing, of decisions made, some of those fellows at the National Training School had told him stories. It was wonderful but not singular, a law underneath all that deciding, everywhere over the country, men sitting down and saying and putting together and subtracting in all kinds of houses and places. That Cuban kid from the University of Havana Sam had introduced him to, the same thing down there in Cuba. . . .

Running one afternoon. How old was he? He was something small and running, that was all, and the street was Fox approaching Westchester, it must have been April, icicles dripping down, and running and running up Fox toward Westchester to beat the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

train coming up the track, to beat the train on an April day, to reach the corner before the train. . . .

"Blue, that's your color," he repeated. "Blue. . . . Do you ever remember running on the streets, just running"—he kissed her—"just running," and her head nodding, her eyes smiling.

"Just running," she said. "Of course."

Overhead the sky droning and water sweeping over a rock, shining it black, a sailboat tipping, a boy running out on the short breakwater and standing there on the edge of it, and the water dunes, the trees along the curving shore, blue trees far off. . . .

"That boy," he said, pointing, "now watch—"

And she nodded, leaning forward, both of them watching like watching something under glass.

The boy was standing there with his hands in the pockets of yellow pants, one sleeve of a brown shirt fluttering. Then he went along the breakwater and balanced himself along the edge of it. He hopped on one foot and then the other. He leaned over sizing the jump to the wet sand below. He jumped and rolled over the sand and he stood up and looked at the mud-streak along the yellow pants and looked some more and then he went along, not in a walk but in something he had devised in which he threw his head back and his knees forward. He progressed. He stopped. He went down on his knees on the sand and picked shells out of it and put them to his ear. He picked up stones and tossed them out on the water. Then he gave it all up and ran and scrambled up the rocks and ran, making noises that were howls mixed with music.

"I asked you," he said, "but I didn't want to until it was settled one way or the other, whether I would or wouldn't go into Party work on that basis. . . . Very well, I *was* in, I was working hard in the Party and I had dropped out of school a long time before—it's a year and a half ago, the time of that strike at the Metro—and there I was, doing Party work, but not until last month when I spoke to Si did I realize that even after you're in you've got to go forwards or backwards, become more or less valuable. . . . And for a month now I've been thinking about it, and realizing that I don't want to do anything else. From all angles," he laughed, "it's a career in the best sense of the word, in the sense of working at something that's necessary and that'll demand the limit of your resources. I've been in the Party a little over a year now but I've worked hard in it and so perhaps I've moved fast and I want to move faster. It's taken me a long time to figure out what it was all about. If I hadn't had the picture of my old man's erratic and crazy socialism I might have been in sooner. . . . Anyway, I'm in and now I think I want to make a career out of it in the best sense of the word, I mean spending a lifetime at it. If you can't see it that way then you don't fully accept it. If the Party thinks I'm worth full-time to it then that'll settle the question. But I didn't want to tell you until it was all worked out," he finished.

"But you've told me," she said, smiling.

"Oh, of course I would've told you, sooner or later," he said, and she seized the hand pointing the remark, held it.

The blue polka-dot dress fluttered, her head against his arm rolled meditatively. "—And me," she said. "It all works out a little differently in my case. . . . Do I want to spend a lifetime at it, in Party work, in the same full way that you do? No, not quite, not yet. . . . But at least everything broadens for me now. And thank heaven—being young enough not to be sorry for throwing away half a lifetime! I know what it is that does things to people and breaks them down—a little bit anyway—"

"That's it," he said quickly, opening his shirt at the throat against the sun. "That's it exactly. Young enough, you haven't built up anything—you haven't been able to!—so there's nothing to be sorry for, not too much I mean. . . . God, Helen if I could let go the way Sam does sometimes about *afterwards*—"

Afterwards rolling and rolling in his brain with the fresh vision with which he had first looked at the world, holding his father's hand, *a future made out of the intimations of earliest childhood,* the sound of wheels fresh, streets, roads, houses, faces, colors fresh. . . .

"But I can't very well," he said, "so it has to be the job, and now—and what more can anyone want than to be in at the end of something and the beginning of something else—that's enough to look forward to for anyone—and as to what's going to happen to people using their lives in their own way and only conforming to the limits of the real world—I'll stop there," he said, laughing.

But a mood continued in him, the remembrance of the earliest years making a mood that fitted afterwards, the first impression of a hill in a Park, Long Island from a chugging motorboat, downtown from a bridge, long yards of railroad cars shimmering black against green grass. . . .

She said: "Well, go on"—her cheeks dimpling in laughter—"I just this second thought of what you looked like last week one night working with those fellows on that shop paper—go on, sing a little, can you really sing, Harry," she teased.

"My mother tells me that when I was four I sang the Ave Maria," he said, "but I don't remember that, because I don't want to."

He stretched out on the bench, sighing comfortably. "Comfort. Ease!" He shut his eyes. "If you shut your eyes," he said, "you'll feel the sun on them, it's nice." She shut her eyes, and they were still for moments, with his hand wandering back over his head to touch the dress, press her thigh gently through the dress, her hand falling on his,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their faces smiling behind shut eyes, the hands clasping and duelling gently.

They talked again after a little while. He persisted in this single vein of remembering certain things, singing "America the Beautiful" in P. S. 83 in the auditorium, the boys in blue trousers and white shirts and the girls in blouses and skirts, with black ties under the collars of the blouses, singing all together, "and going out after school, graduating, going downtown after looking at the ads." He tried to capture that ardor, the ardor of boys with shined faces and pressed suits, each of them with a paper under his arm, streaming into Manhattan by train, trains crossing bridges and showing skyscrapers misty blue in the distance. "And in the afternoons," he said, "without a job, you wander and wander through the streets and look up at windows and look at boats pulling out on the Hudson and take a ferry maybe and come home in the afternoon and fight with the old lady, she cursing and you cursing—"

Remembering, a harmony of remembering, she could recall her father coming home bloody during the I.R.T. strike and her mother's face washed out, her mother's eyes lighting up once in a while to let her see something of a dream left of. . . . something. "I never knew that she wanted to do anything in particular, but the shameful thing is that there could have been something for her, some kind of work into which she could have thrown herself, and now she asks me questions about the League and the Soviet Union cautiously and so afraid—"

It was the ardor that he remembered, the ardor and the sureness of crowds of boys, the edge of poverty ruthlessly dictating and guiding and drilling into the sureness as you passed into manhood. . . .

And talking this way the afternoon passed, yet hung still over them blue and yellow with still white clouds.

They went along the lawns again with the afternoon receding, shadows sliding along trees, in the little stretch of woods the gray nymphs shadowed mournfully over a dry fountain and they had something to eat and some beer at the tavern near the Pelham Bay Station. She got off at Hunt's Point and Harry went down to the Section and she stood at the station for a moment thinking about him. She knew it would be pleasant to live with him, because he had work to do. There were things for her to do, too. From work fertile as the earth the free hours must bloom upward. Like this afternoon there would be other afternoons, few and magnificent, against the sober, fighting background. She went upstairs and walked, the years and the afternoons sparkling in her and before her, forming an inward smile which dimpled her face faintly and the wind played the blue dotted dress about her full figure as she walked.

In Asturias

PRUDENCIO DE PEREDA

WE PUT the can out on to the middle of the dirt floor of the cell and we could all sit along the walls and be away from the smell of it. Then when the guards brought the three of them in, he walked right over to it and sat on the top without taking the cover off. The other two went and sat around the wall but he put himself quickly down on the can and stayed there facing the door with his head held up straight and his hands working between his knees, looking at the door as if he was waiting for them to come and take him, and after a moment he said out loud, "Whatever they do to me, I am still an honest man."

"Hear! Hear!" somebody with a tired voice said. "Hear!"

Everyone was watching him. Some of them had been sleeping with their heads let down on their chests and now they raised them up and looked at him. It was not very light but you could make him out on the can with his shoulders held up like that.

Next to me Garcia moved and I thought that he was going to scratch. I moved away but he was only straightening himself out to look at the man on the can and I moved back. Garcia brought up his knees and folded his arms.

"Are you still a faithful friend, Villegas?" he said suddenly to the man on the can. His voice sounded very quiet in the big room. I saw Villegas turn around quickly and his face brighten up. He seemed very happy to hear Garcia's voice.

"I am, Comrade Garcia," he said in an excited voice. "I am."

"Good! That is the only thing that is important," Garcia said. He kept looking out at Villegas but he did not say any more and after a while Villegas turned his head and began to sit looking at the door again. He did not look so lonely now. I turned around to Garcia.

"You know him?" I said.

"Yes, don't you?"

"I have seen him somewhere," I said, "but I don't remember."

"It is not very long since he came with us. Probably because of that you don't recognize him."

"Oh!" I said. *"Ja."*

We did not say anything for a while then. Garcia seemed to be thinking of something. He sat very still. After a moment he bent his head over to me and said, "How do you feel, Mickey?"

"I? I feel fine, hombre. I'm calm. I feel very calm."

"You want to do me a favor, then?"

"Yes," I said, "sure."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Go and talk to him." He nodded his head towards Villegas.

"Go and talk to him?" I said and I looked at Villegas. He was still sitting straight and upright, waiting quietly. I felt very sorry for him suddenly. "All right," I said.

"I want to see if they have found Fernandez."

"Does this one know Fernandez?"

"Yes, he was in the office. He is very able."

"Oh!" I said.

"I just want to see if he made it. I want to see if he got through. It has a great importance for us."

"I know," I said. "I understand."

"You talk to him, eh? You can talk. Lead up to it easily. Do you see?"

"Yes."

I waited for a moment, sitting there, and then I got over on to my hands and knees and began to creep very slowly over to where Villegas was. I did not want to stand up because if you stood up and walked in the cell it would jar and break the calmness and they would begin to think and talk again. Sitting and almost sleeping in the darkness you can forget that, outside, the revolution is dying and that there is no hope. You can get so that you will not hear the guns, and the yelling and the running will be far away even though you do not sleep.

When did we sleep well and easily the last time? I tried to remember going over to where Villegas was sitting. I went very quietly and when I reached there I stayed lying on the floor by the can and pulled his trouser leg to let him know that I was there.

"Ola, Villegas," I said, *"ola!"*

He turned his head around with a nervous jerk and then looked down and he saw me.

"Hombre!" he said. "You are here!"

"Yes, they like to keep us together. How are you?"

He seemed very nervous and he made little jerky movements with his head.

I smiled up at him. "Can you see me well?" I said.

"Yes, certainly I can. I can see you very well, Mickey," he said slowly. "I guess it can be seen how I am."

"You're all right. Don't worry yourself."

"No?"

"Relax, hombre. Give yourself hope."

"What for? So they can take you by surprise. Not I. I am waiting for them."

"How are things outside?"

"They are terrible. I cannot even talk about them."

"And Oviedo? Did you go to Oviedo, Comrade?" I said. "Speak to me in a low voice."

"I will do that," he said in a very low voice. "Yes, I have gone to Oviedo. I have been very lucky. I have had very good luck in regards to getting out. I went to Oviedo three times and I have been out around the pueblo very much."

"Things are going very badly there, eh?"

"Yes. At this time they are going very badly." He was speaking very quickly and quietly and it seemed as if he was glad that we were talking about these things and not about something else. It was as if there was something else that we should talk about but that we did not want to, and he was sitting down so tight on the cover of the can that I could not smell anything and it was all right lying there.

"Did you see Fernandez in Oviedo, Comrade?" I said after a moment. I tried to say it easily.

"Yes, I saw him."

"How was he?"

"He was very well. They did not catch him yet. They will never get him. Our people will protect him." He bent down to me. "He is something wonderful, that one, eh?"

"Yes, you are right. He is a great leader."

"I know him very well," he said proudly.

"Oh yes."

"Yes, I have that great honor."

"Oh!" I said.

He straightened up and began to look at the door again, but after a moment he jerked his head around and looked down at me to see if I was still there. He did this a few times and I kept looking up at him. After a while I turned a little and got ready to move away. He looked down at me quickly.

"Bien, hombre!" I said. "Until later."

I looked up at him. He seemed very worried.

"Don't go away," he said.

"No?"

"No. Stay here for a moment. We will talk. Everything is going to be all right."

"Surely," I said. "I know that already. Everything is going to come out all right. Don't be discouraged." I gave his knee a little slap. He put his hand on my shoulder.

"But listen," he said. He bent down and I could see how worried he looked. "I have news for you."

"You have news for me?" I said. I felt along my shoulder to reach his hand and push it off, and the calmness and easiness began to go out of me suddenly as your breath does when you are rushing down a steep incline or when you fall, because I remembered that there was only one person he could have news for me about. "What is it?" I said in a whisper.

I began to feel empty and tight inside and he was leaning so much on the side that the lid of the can stood up a little and the smell came down to me. He was very close to me and he could see how frightened I looked but he did not seem to be surprised.

"What is it, Villegas?"

"The girls."

"The girls, Comrade?" I said. I knew whom he was speaking of.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That girl. That tall one, the beautiful one that I used to see you with at the meetings. . . ."

I pushed his hand away and let myself go down and leaned on my arm with my head against the can. I could almost feel him looking down at my head, with all the blood rushing there and making it warm and aching.

"I found her dead—with her two friends—in the prado near Domingo's land." He said it very quickly, as if he did not want to say it but had to finish what he had begun. "That's how it was I got caught. I was going along down there trying to find a way into the town. . . ."

I let my head fall into the dirt without feeling the dampness of it and the stones on my face and when I tried to stop myself from crying my breath came out suddenly and made the sound of a long *Aaah.*

". . . and I walked right into that place and found them on the ground, lying out on the ground there —suddenly, so quiet—and I jumped and got so excited that I yelled right out, 'Hey! Hey! Hey, someone!' before I remembered. Hombre, it was terrible!"

I put up my hand and he grabbed it suddenly. Then I beat it, with his gripping it tightly, against the side of the can, crying and saying, "Do me a favor, hombre. Do me a favor. Stop! Stop!"

"Heh?" he said.

I felt hands on my shoulders trying to lift me up. It was Garcia who was over with us now and he was saying to Villegas, "What were you telling him?"

"I didn't know. I did not think that he would feel like that. You know how it is, Comrade Garcia. I thought everything was done," Villegas said.

I did not want to listen to the talking but it came into my head like thumps and made the blood seem warmer. I was crying, but when I was hearing them it made it seem empty and useless. Garcia was bending down over me and I could hear Villegas telling him, "That's how I got caught. I . . ." and then I tried to pay attention to what Garcia was whispering to me and to feel only the taps on my shoulder so that I could drown out the other voice, but what Garcia was saying was only a low mumble and while I was listening to it, concentrating all on it, I was having the dream I used to have in the time when we were getting ready for all this.

We were all sitting and talking somewhere, everybody seeming happy and wanting to talk, and Lenin was sitting with us and I was right next to him. "May I call you Ilyich?" I kept saying to him. "May I call you Ilyich?"

"Yes," he would smile. "Yes," and he would nod his head.

Now I dreamed of that again, but Lenin's head was bloody. He did not smile and the blood kept running down over his forehead and into his eyes. He still nodded his head and kept saying, "Yes, yes," slowly and weakly, and then she was standing behind him and looking at me. She had on the dress that she was wearing when I saw her the last time and I stared at the dress. I kept staring at it and thinking about it and suddenly I heard Villegas's voice, sounding as loud as a thunderclap in the cell, saying, "The dress was still pulled up. The fiends must have left them just like that."

"Who will believe it, eh? Who will believe it?" somebody whose voice I did not know said.

"They told them they could do that, you know," Villegas said. "They told them they could have the women if they took the town. They told them that."

"Don't I know it?"

"I shit on them!" an old man said. "I shit on every god damned priest in creation."

"I, too," said Villegas. "You have named the right ones. They pushed the soldiers on. They told the Africans the lies. They did it!"

"You have said it, Comrade."

I listened to them all. I was almost calm. Garcia kept patting my shoulder and the ground felt cool and soft and I could not smell anything. Villegas must have been sitting up straight and tight again, and then, after a moment, when it seemed as if they would begin to talk again, we all heard footsteps in rhythm coming down the corridor. We listened and heard the knocks of the hard boots on the stones and we knew that it meant that there was a bunch of them.

"They're coming for somebody," Garcia said. "They've got the guns with them this time. I can tell."

New Calendars

We turn to the kingdom of freedom, extend birth
to new calendars, watch the triumphant path of history
carry the beautiful banner, those red ribbons of love.
For all our brothers, for the better life, to the warm
nights in later summers when lovers are unrepressed;
For all this we raise the banner, not selfish gain.
An old gentleman asked for the motive:
And I told him it is for horseshoe pitching contests,
for mothers happy in their children, seeing them mating.
It is for this man's power to perfect a better hydraulic brake
and for the scholar's new thesis on Greek tragedy.
For the absence of scrap iron and the greased bullet
and the dispossess and the syphilitic woman dying tenderly
and the old man picking food from a rubbish can.
The motive is music in the factory and no picket lines;
in evening the son reading Hamlet to a happy father.
Out with graft in police courts, banish the whining beggar;
preserve the contribution of men of letters, and men in mines:
From each his splendid power, to each his deserved need!

NORMAN ROSS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Last Look Back

JOHN HERRMANN

THE street running out toward the fish and lobster docks, in the small Massachusetts town, looked bare and deserted. The late January day was cold. No snow lay on the ground.

An inexpensive coupé with New York license plates, driving out this street, stopped about fifty feet from a weatherbeaten, unpainted building, on the side of which hung a newly-painted sign, "Johnson's, Lobsters." Except for the newly-painted sign, the building looked exactly as it had nine years before.

A very tall and slender man stepped out of the car and stood with his right hand resting on the door-handle. He looked at the building, and then at the rickety wharf behind it. With the tide at ebb, the piles of the wharf stretched far down, at crazy angles, into the black water of the narrow inlet.

The man's gaze roamed from the wharf to the thick trees across the inlet, where he could see a huge, shiny, white house, boarded up for the winter. Further to the left, he saw other houses, but no people. His eyes followed the curve of the inlet toward the town itself, then back to the stretch of bare, weed-covered ground directly opposite.

Lying on this patch of ground were a few small piles of old lumber, a heap of lobster pots, a pile of ashes and refuse; and on the far side, near the high water mark, lying on its side, the two masts touching the ground, he saw a small sailing boat.

He had driven over two hundred miles for a look at the bleached, unpainted ruin of what had once been his proud little ketch. Standing, still holding the door-handle of his car, this man gazed steadily at the boat for three or four minutes. Except for the occasional flap of the brim of his soft velour hat and the movement of the skirt of his overcoat in the wind, there was no sign of motion about him. His eyes stared fixedly at the sad, rotted, weatherbeaten boat, and not a muscle in his face moved.

Into memory, moving swiftly, rhythmically, came scenes and events out of the past nine years of his life. His memories were not only of important things, but in flashes he rememberd trivial, inconsequential happenings. And out of these remembrances, the thing which impressed him most strongly was their lack of continuity, of meaning. They, following the pattern of nine years, led nowhere.

After his daydream, which had started when he first saw the small boat lying helplessly on her beam ends, he dropped his hand from the door-handle of the car. He was shocked and slightly ashamed when he realized that, after nine years, he was back to his boat again. Back where, just now, his memories had begun.

If he accepted the orthodox view of what makes success or failure in this country, this man would be forced to acknowledge that he was a failure. In the years following college and his entrance into the practice of law, up until the summer he first sailed the boat, however, he could say that he had once enjoyed the beginnings of success.

Before 1927, he was a junior partner in a highly respected law firm in New York. He was married to a young woman with good social connections and a splendid education. He had steadily added to his bank account, had purchased a few securities, as investments, not for speculative purposes. Above all, he worked very hard and conscientiously. Merely an average student, unnoticed at the Harvard law school, he had grown to be perhaps the most promising of the eight junior partners in his law firm.

He had worked very hard, and for long hours. In the spring of 1927, his doctor told him he had a nervous breakdown. Absolute rest and no business worries, he was advised, would cure him, given time. He and his wife moved to Maine, and rented a small cottage from an old sea captain on the river below Wiscasset.

Then the boat came into his life, and there began the gradual transformation which first stripped him of the ambition to become a great corporation lawyer, and finally made him begin to doubt that the courts, the law, and the very institutions of his country, really operated for the greatest good of the greatest number.

Even the desire for a home and family, which Edward Peyton had tried earnestly to realize with his wife, Helen, was now of the distant past.

He looked at the gray, bleached hull of the boat. He knew, even at the distance from which he watched, that nine years had finished her. The sadness Edward Peyton felt as he walked toward the boat was reminiscent of the sad hollowness, rising from the pit of his stomach and working out through his whole body, which had infected him when he lost his wife.

Peyton seemed impelled, almost against his will, toward the lifeless ruin of the boat, which had once seemed an animate creature, capable of occasional caprice, yet dependable, graceful, beautiful, and willing. He walked slowly, his body stiff, his long legs moving steadily, surely, taking him down the incline of the lost toward the water's edge. His eyes, unmoving under prominent eyelashes, half blond, half gray, stared straight ahead.

Half-way down the gentle incline, Edward Peyton stopped suddenly and turned his head northwestward in the direction he assumed Boston to lie. Years ago, the night before his little boat had put in to her last harbor, he and his wife were becalmed far out in Boston Bay. They were cruising along the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coast from Maine, aiming to bring the boat near New York. Helen was almost in frenzy that last night, watching the haze of light in the sky over Boston, looking repeatedly at her wrist watch, counting the hours and minutes before the Italian anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti, were to be electrocuted for a murder she was certain they had not committed.

"They will be killed for believing the world could be made better," she said. "If only millions of people would protest, would break open the walls of the jail. It is too late, I know it is. We should be there marching tonight."

Edward told her that, guilty or not, the law had found them so, and were the penalty of the law not carried out, the nation's whole legal structure would be weakened. For the sake of the law and to protect the intricate workings of the country's legal machinery, it would be harmful to put obstacles in the way of a smooth, harmonious working out of justice. Even were these two men by chance innocent, a failure to carry out the decisions of the courts, Edward foresaw, might open the way for truly guilty men later to escape punishment for their crimes.

"Bosh," was Helen's answer to his argument. "They are punished because they wanted to turn the millowners' excessive dividends into higher wages for millhands. I can never forgive you for being so cold and legal-minded. With your brain, if there were only some warm human blood in it, you could have helped with the defense. I would have been so proud."

Helen finally looked at her watch and said, "They are dead now, surely they are dead." Then she started sobbing, and Edward sat opposite her in the cockpit. The sky over Boston seemed to have grown more fiery. Not knowing what to do to comfort Helen, Edward looked over his shoulder, watching the progress of a freighter, steaming quietly, unconcernedly out to sea.

The light breeze was insufficient to fill the sails. Slanting in the oily swell, the sails crackled in a somber rhythm and Edward then felt the impassably wide gulf separating his wife from himself. Though still his wife, and alive, and sitting across from him, so near that their knees almost touched, a feeling that should have been a premonition, told him he must not touch her, must not make a move in her direction.

Her sobbing increased. Not only did she bewail the death of the shoemaker and fishpeddler, she cried for the death of a dream which she had hoped would be realized with Edward.

Now, years later, Edward Peyton knew that this must have been so. The faraway look in his eyes, grown watery in the cold January wind, as he stood half-way between his car and the boat, was a result of remembering her sobs and the way she suddenly stood up in the cockpit and then went into the tiny cabin, still crying, and remained there until the morning breeze blew them to the yacht club mooring at Hull.

During those long, starlit morning hours Edward Peyton had built up a justification for his attitude. It was, that law must be preserved as sacred, even at the expense of an occasional miscarriage of justice. How otherwise could the structure of society be held together, he asked himself.

That morning in Hull, Helen sat with him at the breakfast table reading morning papers, refusing to eat, while he sat opposite her, glumly stowing away ham and eggs, toast, fruit, and coffee. He did not care to read the papers.

To Edward Peyton, that day now seemed far more than nine years behind him, and what took place in his life before that day seemed almost to belong in another existence. He thought of his childhood in Virginia, his widower father, the lawyer of his small home town, his sister who had since married and taken her bankrupt father to live with her in North Carolina.

He remembered his college days, where the fact that his family claimed General Lee and General Gordon as kinsmen could not make up for the shortness of his monthly allowance. That was all very long ago, much further in the past than the date of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Even in 1927, I was still a child, he thought. He shook his head back and forth, jerkily, raising his chin, closing his eyes, shaking out of his mind, momentarily, his memories of the past.

He walked on, over the hard, black, frozen mud and the dead, brown grass. Once abreast of the boat, he stopped and noticed that the gar-board strakes were rotted clean through. Johnson must have let her lie in the wet mud, he thought; and then, remembering his failure to send money or even a word to the lobsterman regarding what should be done with the boat, he merely added the fault of her decay to what seemed the already staggering burden of his own past failings.

The lights in the cabin top were broken, the masts were cracked and warped, seams were wide open, and her portside lay buried two feet in mud. Peyton walked on and turned to look at her wineglass-shaped stern. There he saw the aluminum letters of her name. Only the "N" of "HELEN" was missing, but the outline of this letter was still faintly visible.

A wave of jealousy swept over him, making his head feel as though encircled in a steel band, and the figure of his one time dearest friend seemed standing before him. In Peyton's mind, Henry Scoville was there, grinning contemptuously at him.

It was Henry Scoville who suggested naming the boat for Peyton's wife. It was also Henry who implanted in Helen the strong feeling that Sacco and Vanzetti were innocent, and that justice for such men as these was dead.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Henry Scoville had been a member of the Sacco-Vanzetti defense committee. Because he was Edward Peyton's closest friend in college and the years immediately following, he visited Edward and Helen in Maine, in the late spring of 1927. He and Edward talked of sailboats. With the aid of the old captain, they picked up an old sailing ship's yawl boat, rigged her as a ketch, built a cabin with two berths, painted her topsides black, the deck buff, and the cabin sides a glistening white. The old captain was proud of the little vessel he had created, with the help of his two assistants.

"She's young," he said, referring to the fact that she was but twenty-two feet long. "But she's got the lines of a yacht. And those yawl boats, they'll go anywhere. Yessir, they're fast, and they'll take anything."

Henry Scoville and Edward shared expenses on the boat equally. Helen complained that it was foolish to spend so much money. The boat was so small that she was frightened at the idea of sailing in it. But on the day she walked down the lane to the tidal inlet from the river, carrying in her hand a bottle of Prohibition red wine with which to christen the boat, she felt that perhaps it was really worth it.

For the first time since his illness, Edward Peyton had good color in his cheeks. His eyes sparkled with happiness and pride in the little ship. Three or even four hundred dollars would not be thrown away on a boat if it helped him back to health.

When they reached the landing, Helen looked with genuine admiration at the boat, riding so proudly, her lines and proportions making her look almost a model of a sixty-footer. Then Helen saw her name on the stern.

She turned and looked from Edward to Henry, both of whom were eyeing her, waiting for this discovery. Helen felt very happy, and somehow seemed to look upon Henry with more friendly warmth in her eyes than ever before. The boat was half his, and the boat was the *Helen*.

Edward Peyton, nine years later, gazing at the wreck of this beautiful small boat, remembered this with jealous bitterness. Then he realized that such intense feeling was unreal—it was not of this present year, it was of long ago. It was of the time when his great friend, Henry Scoville, was a crusading liberal, an admirer of Felix Frankfurter, a writer of articles in defense of two Italian anarchists.

Peyton walked completely around the boat. The blocks had been removed from the mastheads, the cleats all were pried loose from the decks. He had hoped that coming to look at the boat would help him solve a problem which began bothering him when the N.R.A. first seemed to be failing to carry out its promises to the hard-pressed people. This problem became of even greater importance when the N.R.A. was declared unconstitutional, and Edward Peyton left his temporary government job in Washington. He left it with the feeling that lawmakers and men in power were not competent to work out the problem of supplying society with its needs. This problem, he had came to believe, would have to be solved by the majority, acting in the interests of those whose needs were greatest. Whenever such thoughts crossed his mind, Edward Peyton found mixed with them the memory of Sacco and Vanzetti, and back of this the memory of his wife, blurred and indistinct, accusing him of possessing a bloodless, legal mind.

Peyton noticed that the tide had turned. It was now rushing up the inlet, eddying around the piles of the wharf. He recalled how few times Henry Scoville had been able to sail the boat. He had to go to Boston, rush to New York, to Washington, in those last months of the lives of the two anarchists, in an effort to win support for their defense, to spread publicity about the case, to confer with the committee.

Then he again came to Maine for a few days to work on an article and took just a small amount of time off to sail the boat. Finally in July he left for good, saying he must remain in Boston night and day until the end.

When he left, he told Edward, "The boat is yours. I won't get another chance at it, I give you my share." Edward accepted gladly and offered to pay for the share, but Henry refused to take any payment.

Now it almost seemed to Peyton, reviewing this time that Henry had, in giving him the boat, taken Helen in return. For from that time onward, Helen was so absorbed in the defense of the anarchists that Edward felt compelled to argue the case for the State of Massachusetts when discussing it with her.

While Helen eagerly read the pamphlets and articles sent her by Henry Scoville, all of which seemed to Edward of a decidedly radical and un-American trend, he had developed an attitude of pugnacious conservatism. His knowledge of the Constitution and laws of the country upset and confused Helen in argument, made her back up against a wall and argue on grounds of hunger, joblessness, ignorance; and led her to oppose, with a plea for human rights, those sacred rights of individual property which Edward Peyton upheld with logical, keen argument.

It was now with a feeling of shame that Peyton thought of those arguments, but they were of the past and could not be recalled. For on the morning after the execution, when he and his wife went to a restaurant for breakfast, she told him she was going to Boston that day, she intended to march in the funeral procession. That much, at least, she would do.

Then it was that Peyton destroyed what future peace of mind the memory of his wife might have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brought him. For he refused to go with her, asked her not to go, and then decided to haul out the boat and halt their cruise. He told her then that he would see her in New York.

When she left for Boston, he sailed the boat along the coast to the small harbor where she now lay, bleached and gray. Then he went to New York. Arriving there he discovered that the nervous strain of weeks of argument and disagreement with Helen had made him again feel sick, weak, and shaky on his feet.

What was still harder for him to bear was that he developed an inward belief that Helen and Henry Scoville were perhaps right—perhaps he was cold, heartless, and, as Helen had called him, inhuman. He refused to admit this openly; he downed it whenever it began to trouble his mind, by coldly, logically, arguing to himself, sometimes audibly, that his views then were correct and, ultimately, for the greatest good to the greatest number.

Edward Peyton had now run out of all such arguments. Nine years had brought him back to his boat and also back to his wife, for as he turned away from the boat and walked toward his car he thought he could feel, honestly and wholeheartedly, all of the emotion his wife must have felt that night in Boston Bay and next morning in Hull, before she left for the funeral of Sacco and Vanzetti.

When she came back to New York after the funeral, she had a severe cough. She had marched with Henry Scoville in the funeral procession, in the dreary rain, and once had been knocked to the ground by a policeman's horse, as the line squirmed around one of the huge trucks placed across the street by police to impede the march of mourners.

When she approached Edward upon her return, she drew from her pocket a red arm band, inscribed with the words, "Remember, Justice Crucified, August 22, 1927." She held it up to his face and said, "I wore it in the march." Edward read it and did not smile. He was glad, now, that at least he had not smiled.

Peyton walked very slowly toward his car, thinking—his head bowed slightly, the forehead drawn to make a deep perpendicular line between his eyebrows. He studied a small pile of old lumber he was passing and thought of Helen's racking cough, which had developed into a fatal illness. Two years after she marched in the funeral procession, she died in Arizona, where doctors had advised him she might be cured.

Helen died with Peyton still professing his lack of interest in the welfare of the class whose ability to labor is their prime possession. He did not know that, in her last illness, Helen observed him reading literature spread about the house, relating to the Sacco-Vanzetti case and other phases of the labor movement. He had tried to do this reading secretly until her death, which finally came with suddenness, at a time he thought she showed signs of improvement.

From then on, he read such literature with interest and increasing sympathy and understanding. But he felt that he could do nothing about it. His savings were spent, his securities gone, his old firm had not taken him back, and he had to accept a job doing research in a small and much less prominent law firm.

Henry Scoville wrote to him occasionally from his home in Boston, but Edward avoided meeting him, until through Henry he got a job in the New Deal administration in Washington. Edward had been in Washington only a short time when Henry Scoville was fired from his job, accused of being too radical for the New Deal.

During that time in Washington, Edward and Henry had been friendly, but Edward was, even then, unwilling to let his friend know the changes taking place in his ways of thinking. He argued that the New Deal was doing all that could be expected. But this argument was for Henry's benefit.

To himself, Edward decided that the New Deal did not go far enough, and when it was finally scrapped, he told himself that those who labor must work out their own salvation—that those who profit by man's labor seem decidedly unwilling to do anything about it, except in speeches.

When Peyton returned to New York, he got a letter from Henry asking him to help work on a celebrated labor case coming up for trial in the South. Edward refused. If someone other than Henry had asked him, he would have gone into it.

Edward Peyton finally reached the windswept road and, glancing either way, walked across to his car. He opened the door and slid in under the steering wheel. With his left hand resting on the door-handle, he looked again at the boat.

He felt inclined to smile when he thought how incoherent his first memories on seeing the boat had been. For the memories and thoughts which ran through his mind after he had left the car and started walking down the incline, seemed now to tie up perfectly, into a pattern which he could easily follow and understand.

He slammed the door of the car shut. He knew now that he had not driven that long distance for a look at the boat. It occurred to him that not even a new forty-footer could take him away from the world in which he lived; he could not escape. He stepped on the starter, pulled the choke button, and ran the motor a minute to allow it to warm up.

Boston was only a few minutes' drive from this small seaport town. Henry Scoville was in Boston. Edward knew he had made this trip to see Henry Scoville. He knew that all over the country there were workers and also farmers in need of legal help, because efforts made to improve their conditions led to their arrest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Henry would let him know what he could do about it. With his left foot pressed on the clutch pedal, he put his car into low gear. "I'll tell Henry I couldn't hold out any longer," he thought as he started twisting the steering wheel hard to the left. "I'll tell him it was Sacco and Vanzetti did it to me." He lifted his left foot easily and slowly from the clutch pedal; the car started and swung around in the direction of Boston. Edward Peyton shifted gears into second and then high. As the car gathered momentum, he realized that he had forgotten to take a last look over his shoulder at the sad little ketch.

Two Poems

The Signal from the House

I said to the watcher at the gate,
"They also kill who wait."

I cried to the mourner on the stair,
"Mother, I hate you for those tears."

To mistress of the ruined hall,
The keeper of the sacred heart,

I brought the mind's indifference
And the heavy marble of my face.

For these who were too much with me
Were secretly against me:

Hostages to the old life,
Expecting to be ransomed daily

And for the same fond reason
From the deep prison of their person,

Their lantern shining in the window
Had signaled me, like cry of conscience,

Had flagged the engine of my will
At local station marked "Farewell."

Confidential Instructions

When, on your dangerous mission gone,
You underrate our foes as dunces,
Be wary, not of sudden gun,
But of your partner at the dances;

Lest you be tamed in dead-end alleys
Where the mind's virtue drops from sight,
Loath to unlink from darling follies
Cuddled in houses of deceit;

Or cozened dearly by the bitch
Of souls, the international spy
Whirling in young men's arms, to each
Mistress, but in old carrion's pay.

STANLEY J. KUNITZ

MacLeish and Proletarian Poetry

ALAN CALMER

READING this book* makes one think of the passage in *The Sacred Wood* which refers to the "historical sense" of the poet—that sense of both the timeless and the temporal which identifies a writer with tradition at the same moment that it makes him "acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity."

This quality is present in MacLeish's most forthright political poems. In "Speech to those who say Comrade," for example, he turns to the most common term and experience of the revolutionary movement; yet his response to it is genuinely poetic, and traditionally so. This is achieved not alone by beauty of phrase and nobility of expression; it issues from the depths of the man's way of seeing the world, which is the way of seeing of a *poet*. The result is not a write-up of the slogans of last year's May Day, nor of events whose description falls within the limits of prose; it is a concentrated, universalized sentiment, which evokes the timeless as well as the temporal essence of modern comradeship, and the timeless and the temporal together. To do this, not only without effusion but with the dignity of classic utterance; to recapture not only what is constant in this belief but to illumine what is immediate, and at the same time to deepen its permanence through its immediacy—to do this with a concept like brotherhood, *in the third decade of the twentieth century,* is no mean accomplishment:

The brotherhood is not by the blood certainly:
But neither are men brothers by speech—by saying so:
Men are brothers by life lived and are hurt for it:

Who are the born brothers in truth? The puddlers
Scorched by the same flame in the same foundries:
Those who have spit on the same boards with the blood in it:

Those that have hidden and hunted and all such—
Fought together: labored together: they carry the
Common look like a card and they pass touching.

Throughout *Public Speech* the presence of this "historic sense" can be felt—equally in the last ten love lyrics which make up half of the collection, and in the verse of public statement. It is in "Speech to a crowd," with its materialist emphasis and its concluding exhortation: "The world was always yours: you would not take it." It is in "Pole star for this year," from the opening stanza with its cold sense of etern-

* *Public Speech,* by Archibald MacLeish. Farrar and Rinehart. $1.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ity, of "ancient sureness always," to the last with its moral insight into the changes which have wiped out every former "guide-mark of the mind," leaving only the love that "hardens into hate" and "leads now when all others darken"—an intensely and traditionally poetic expression of the love for humanity which is one of the primal drives against a reactionary social system.

Unlike most of the political verse being written today, there is nothing cocksure or blatant about *Public Speech*. There is no easy sloganizing or parroting of doctrine or eagle oratory. Instead, there is an ideological depth to these poems, a firmness about their thinking which comes from an inner compulsion. They are not synthetic, fabricated out of external materials; they ring true because their philosophy is perfectly attuned to the poet's personal emotion and the emotion to the philosophy, and because one arises out of the other.

The *sureness* of thought in these verses speaks forth in unwavering tones that carry farther than the irresolute Hamlet-voice of the early MacLeish. The ideologic ballasting in *Public Speech* has strengthened the hull and indeed the whole structure of his poetry. It has brought greater force and clarity to his type of verse-making, although it has also brought a certain bare and abstract statement. In spite of this, it has added firmness to his imagery, without draining the sensitive lyricism of his earlier work. If anything, it has deepened the imprint of that imagery—as, to take one isolated phrase, where he recalls the "metal odor of danger" sensed by Americans overseas in 1917. Even from a formal point of view, MacLeish has reached out in new directions, extending the range of poetic instruments. His technical dexterity has led him to an excellent device—illustrated in this collection by the end rimes of "The sunset piece"—whereby he eliminates the sweetish effect that has virtually banned rime schemes from modern verse.

Compared with MacLeish's new book, most of the efforts of our younger proletarian poets loom rather small. This may be an unpatriotic remark to make about one's own generation; yet such a judgment is hard to avoid when one considers the aggregate of recent political verse written in this country.

Anyone who has watched the emergence of the younger poets—most of the new voices in this decade are somewhere near the left—must have noticed the lack of deep devotion to their craft, the absence of a profound sense of the integrity of their writing, which one finds in all of MacLeish's work. There are few evidences among them of a real determination to accept the discipline of their craft—painstakingly to chisel line and phrase, to freshen language, to wrestle with the problems of form, to assimilate a usable tradition, to penetrate to the bone of contemporary reality and put its essence in enduring poetic shape.

To some extent this is undoubtedly due to shortcomings in their own characters and abilities. Yet there is a certain external force inherent in the whole nature of our time which pulls them away from an earnest concern with poetry. The younger writers have been particularly affected because they came of literary age during this period, whereas MacLeish's generation reached maturity before its arrival. This social influence has been pointed to many times: it has been shown that in a period like the present, when severe political crises and economic stress occupy the foreground of our existence, the struggle to achieve artistic excellence, or even expression, tends to become marginal, if not entirely irrelevant. It is natural to find this objective social force operating within the revolutionary movement.

While Communism has elevated the place of literature in society, the close connection of the poet with the labor movement has affected him in an opposite way: it has emphasized the insignificance of phrase-making as compared with practical activity. Again, while the spread of Communist ideology has swung the poet away from Axel's castle toward social reality—a change which has turned him in the direction of major literature—his contact with a mass movement has to some degree distracted him from his craft, tending to make his poetry an avocation in the midst of organizational and journalistic demands. More, it has encouraged him to think and see—and write—in terms of other *media;* it has helped to reduce his poetry to a reporting of "militant" ideas and events, and to direct political propaganda.

Although the Marxian movement has led the poet out of the corral of preciosity into the open spaces of central human experience, it has tolerated a narrow utilitarian conception of art, identifying the logic of the creative process with the logic of political agitation. This emphasis has produced some interesting minor experiments; but such a notion ultimately has the effect of confining the poetic spirit to a narrow vein of inspiration and experience which is quickly exhausted—which has been largely exhausted already, if we are to judge by the product of some of the younger poets. It leads to a type of sterility as harmful in its own way as the arid results of pure estheticism.

There is still another way in which external factors exert their pressure upon revolutionary literature. While the latter is helping to build a bridge for the re-communication of the serious artist with a mass audience, this very situation makes it easier for the vulgar habits of "popular" commercial writing to seep in. The same get-famous-quick psychology which has cheapened so much talent in America seems to be lurking around the proletarian camp. It has tempted some of the younger poets to forsake

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their craft simply because other fields of writing receive more popular acclaim. It has impelled others to suppress their natural poetic manner in favor of other manners more fashionable at the moment. Although there are few places in which the proletarian writer can be printed, the eagerness to discover new talents has inflated the reputations of several young poets—followed by inevitable deflation; in one or two recent cases we have even witnessed the disheveled appearance of a first book of verse, thrown together without careful selection and rewriting.

I wonder if it has to be remarked that these negative influences are in no sense intrinsic to proletarian literature; on the contrary, they are largely the result of empiric practices opposed to Marxian esthetics and to the very fundamentals of Communist theory. Nevertheless, revolutionary critics must accept some share of the blame—for not warning against these evils and occasionally for encouraging them. Of course, from another angle, the fault lies primarily with the poet himself, who must have the toughness of mind and the sense of moral balance, the stamina and the fortitude, to overcome such influences.

In his new book, MacLeish has been more successful than the younger poets in riding the issues which harass the revolutionary poet today. He has steered his course just far enough to the port side to throw his poetry into focus with his new subject-matter: in *Public Speech* his personal experience and poetic equipment are synchronized perfectly with his new political direction.

But, to continue this nautical allegory, MacLeish did not always have such easy sailing. For a long period he was becalmed upon the idle ocean of the expatriate mood; among other things he had to throw his ventriloquistic cargo overboard without capsizing his poetic craft. He succeeded in doing this by the time he reached *New Found Land*, where his caustic temper was mellowed by a soft autumnal beauty. But no sooner did he depart from its shores then he was assailed by the waves and winds of social upheaval, and cast adrift. His odyssey of confusion and bewilderment, recorded in *Frescoes* and surrounding poems, was interpreted by some critical lighthouse-keepers as a trip toward reaction.

Yet even in his wanderings MacLeish passed through the mainstream of his time. To step up our nautical figure one last notch, his barometer has always been extremely sensitive to the central elements of his age. Unlike Mr. Eliot's instruments, which were put out of commission more than a decade ago—causing him to turn into treacherous channels—MacLeish's compass has enabled him to move ahead. If *Public Speech* indicates the direction and the skill of its navigator, then MacLeish is on the way towards a significant major poetry.

These Dead

These are the dead. I number them in sleep:

Whose fathers shaped these hills,
cut down each needed tree
and cleared a field
nor ever swung an axe
where meaning lacked or need
and all that they have done and all
their dreams are gone.

What houses they contrived
to hold the smaller sun
of winter night,
these too are crumbled now
and what was beautiful
gone with the death of dreams as they
are also gone.

No beauty left nor good
save to the men whose wish
for death is strong,
stronger than blood grown thin
within their rotted veins
who now are dead as those whom death
and dust have claimed.

But death to them and dream
came in the flood of time
and cut them down
and was no cancer borne
within the rotted flesh
of their beginnings as is that
of these too dead.

These are the dead I number now in sleep
and the cut flowers,
cool in bowls on glass
that clouds not to their breath but one must come
a dust cloth in her hand. Oh, these are truly dead
who cut the living tree for hills beyond,
turn field to lawn, spread lilies on a pool
and wrap in wool the pleasures of their kind,
and bind a woman's feet before all men
and set no limit to the good that they
would render useless to their barren pride.

And still fear lives within their sightless eyes
who know that those who shaped the dream have died
and do not know what end awaits the man
who lives but on the drying husks of dreams
that are not his, and have been long outworn.

Oh, may their fears grow quiet, may they learn
what little need there is to kill the dead!
We will go carefully, be almost tender.
For only one thing must they be prepared:
when the clean plow cuts through the rotten soil
THE DEAD GO UNDER.

EDWARD J. FITZGERALD

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CROSS-COUNTRY

Al and the Chief

ON THE second night of the Pressed Steel Car strike we were holding a rally in the Ukrainian hall, the biggest meeting place in town. Mike Peters was in the chair getting ready to call the crowd to order. Johnny Turek, the president of the Union, was talking to me on the platform. The hall was packed. The whole town turns out for the "speakin'" in steel centers.

Al Lake, our local organizer on duty in McKees Rocks, walked over to me and Turek and said:

"The chief of police is standing in back of the hall. Do we want him here—or do we run our strike meetings without a flatfoot taking it all in?"

I looked toward the back of the hall and finally recognized the chief through the pipe and stogie smoke. I don't think I've ever seen an uglier man. About five years ago he started out to arrest a couple of Italian Black Hands who had sent a fellow countryman a letter saying they were coming to his house to shoot hell out of him on a certain day and hour. The chief went to the threatened Italian's house and sat with him in his kitchen to wait and catch the Black Hands.

When the smoke cleared away, the chief was lying in a heap—half his face blown away by shot gun slugs and the pisano was very much dead. They are still looking for the Black Hands. The wound left a horrible sneer on the chief's face that never changes.

So, turning to Al, I answered, "Go down and tell the chief that we don't need him here—we can take care of our meetings without the cops."

Al jumped down from the platform and pushed his way through the crowd to the back of the hall where the chief was standing. But I couldn't see what took place because right then Mike Peters called the meeting to order. When I got up to speak to the crowd, I glanced to the rear of the hall and saw the chief wasn't there. Al was sitting up on a windowsill, and he waved a pudgy hand at me to let me know that the cop had left. I started speaking and forgot all about the matter.

That was yesterday.

This morning, as soon as I walked into strike headquarters, there was a message waiting for me from Al. He had written a short note on a piece of brown wrapping paper. It said: "Com down to ware I am. Am in troble." Then he had a P. S. down in one corner—"Don't tell nobody ware I am." That part of his note was easy for me to comply with, simply because he didn't say where he was, in the note. I asked a few of the strikers who had just come in from night duty on the picket line, who had brought the message. They said a kid had left it a few minutes before I came in. I inquired as to who the kid was and found out that his dad ran a little grocery store down in the section of town called the Bottoms.

Just then, Johnny Turek came in all excited and says: "Jees, fellahs, there's somethin' up outside. The cops and the firemen are riding up one street an' down the other, jumpin' out and lookin' in the poolrooms and stores. They're sure as hell after somebody!"

"Didn't you find out who they're after?" I asked, knowing right well by this time that it must be Al.

"They ain't sayin' nothin'. They're just lookin'," he says.

I could see that whatever it was, the trouble Al spoke about in his note must be pretty bad. I decided to start out and hunt for him. There were several of the strikers' cars sitting out front of headquarters, and I got one of the boys to drive me down to the Bottoms. On the way we passed a police car touring slowly along the street, looking at every passerby. I sat hunched low in the seat so that they wouldn't recognize me, and we passed them.

We came to the grocery store in the Bottoms. I got out of the car and went in. The proprietor, a little weazened Polack with a broomstraw mustache that reached his chin and hid his mouth completely, recognized me and motioned me to wait until he finished waiting on a fat woman customer, who couldn't seem to make up her mind between garlic sausage or blood pudding. He finally got rid of her, and we walked into his dingy living room behind the store.

Although no one was around to hear us, he leaned up into my ear and whispered hoarsely, "Al, he vant see you. He say you hurry oop. He have bad fight with chief while 'go. Chief say if he catch, he blow head off from Al."

"He had a fight with the chief?" I asked, worried.

"Al, he coom run here lilly time 'go. Run like hell. Write piece paper and run like hell away. He tell me where you find him." He wrinkled his forehead and looked mysterious.

"Where is he?" I asked.

"He someplace cops no find, for sure."

"Well, where?" I demanded impatiently. And then, a sly smile spread over his pale flat face, and once again he leaned over and whispered: "Al, he be *inchoorch!*"

That was certainly an amazing bit of information. If you knew Al, you would be as surprised as I was. The last place in the world you would look for that hard-headed, two-fisted lad would be in a church. I'd heard him boast once that he'd been to church many times when he was a kid, but only around Christmas when they gave candy away to the kids.

I asked our Polack friend just which of the numerous churches in McKees Rocks Al had selected. He scratched his head, stumped for a moment on remembering the name, and then proudly announced that Al was over on Fourth Street in the "Immacklehar." From that, I gathered that Al was in the Immaculate Heart, the big Catholic church.

I went out and got in the car and told the lad driving me to stop at the church. He looked at me as though I'd suddenly become light headed, but he drove me over. I told him to park down the street and wait. Several police cars full of firemen dashed by us without slowing up. I went over to the church entrance. I took my hat off and went in. It was cool and dark inside, the early morning sun was filtering through the stained-glass windows and showering down on the aisles in quiet pools of color. Snowy white statues, gold-gilded, with china blue eyes, stared down on the pews from little niches in the walls. Their eyes looked very sad, but they didn't look hungry and tired like real humans do when they get sad about something. A few people were over on one side of the church, some kneeling, others just sitting. A steady drone of muffled voices echoed from over that direction. I sat down and waited. Al was nowhere in sight. In a little while I found him. He came out of a little box-like affair and tiptoed over to where I was sitting. He squeezed his big two hundred pounds of bone and gristle

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into the pew beside me and winked very piously.

I whispered to him—"What the hell's this all about?"

"Get down like you're prayin' 'n we c'n talk."

I kneeled down.

"The cops raisin' hell outside?" he asks me.

"They're tearing round the town like mad—what'd you do?"

"I socked the chief 'bout an hour ago."

"Why?"

"He musta' got sore when I run him outa the meetin' last night."

"What's that got to do with hiding in here this morning?"

"He spied me on the street while ago—jumped out and swung at me—I swung faster. Reached for his pistol when he hit the ground. I ran. Shot at me—missed. Ran after me—knew he'd have cops on all corners in five minutes huntin' me—decided to come here—never think o' findin' me in a joint like this."

"How long 've you been here?"

"'Bout forty-fi' minutes."

"Praying all the time?"

"Prayin' hell—I've been *confessin'*."

"Confessing? For the love of . . . "

"Yep. Over there in that little room."

"How come—getting religion?"

"Nope."

"Well, what?"

"Saw people goin' in, takin' turns—figgered I'd take a crack at it—pass the time away."

"What'd you tell the priest?"

"Oh—I couldn't get started right at first. Told him I figured my soul needed cleanin'. Knew the big shots from the mill go to this church. I told him I'd been sleepin' with most of the bosses' wives. He near throwed a fit."

When he told me that, I decided to get him out of there before he got any more ideas of how to pass the time away while the cops and firemen were scouring the town for him. I motioned him to follow me. I went out first. The coast was clear. The driver pulled the car up and I told him to step on it and drop me off at Choynski's beer parlor. We got there without being spotted, and in a few minutes, I had Choynski put Al down in his cellar and keep him there till the trouble blew over.

JOHN MULLEN

A Letter from Chicago

FOR almost two decades, Chicago has been proud of itself as a literary center. Every few weeks, a group of the old-guard literary brahmins gather around the fireplace and discuss the good old days: the days of Ben Hecht and Sherwood Anderson, Carl Sandburg and Harry Hansen; the days of the inception of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse,* the *Little Review,* and the intellectual symposia at the justly famous Dill Pickle Club.

Chicago, in those fiery post-War days, was a mecca for all the young idealists who later became premature cynics and, like Floyd Dell and Maxwell Bodenheim, fled to Greenwich Village. Each morning, new knights arose to do battle with the Philistines. The black flag was raised for Mencken, Nathan, and God. Even the new eastern magazines of literary revolt—*Seven Arts,* the *Dial,* and the revamped *Smart Set*—became the mouthpieces of the pyrotechnical Chicago group.

But out of this city which promised to become the intellectual hub of the Middle West, the past many years have produced nothing but sterility and superficial sophistication.

If we wish to become acquainted with the present guardians of the Chicago literary front, we need do no more than pick up a slim volume called *So Red the Nose, or, Breath in the Afternoon,* which is, the publishers tell us, "a collection of cocktail recipes by celebrated authors." The book is edited by Sterling North, book critic of the *Chicago Daily News,* and Carl Kroch, son of the owner of the Kroch chain of bookshops. Among the Chicago contributors we find: Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry;* Mackinlay Kantor, the novelist; Marion Strobel, the poet; Arnold Gingrich, editor of Chicago's own *Esquire,* "the magazine for men"; Margaret Ayer Barnes, the novelist; and the late Henry Justin Smith, managing editor of the *Chicago Daily News.*

"By their fruits ye shall know them." *So Red the Nose, or, Breath in the Afternoon* has been the sole collective contribution to the turbulent Chicago cultural scene, in a city that has witnessed an ignorant and officious mayor ban two of the year's finest plays, *Tobacco Road* and *The Children's Hour;* in a city that has passed a fascist "gag law," prohibiting periodicals such as the *New Masses* and the *Nation* from the newsstands; in a city that has constantly hindered free expression of speech and opinion in America's "liberal" university, the University of Chicago.

Some time ago, in the *Nation,* the Misses Marshall and McCarthy, in "Our Critics, Right or Wrong," told us how personal friendships affect literary criticism in the *New York Herald-Tribune* and *Saturday Review of Literature* cliques. But the New York exponents of cheek-to-cheek criticism might apprentice themselves to the Chicago literary back-slappers to receive instructions in the technique of "friendly reviews."

In New York, the writer or independent critic has some degree of freedom; he can at least, from the divers literary groups, choose one that most appeals to him. In Chicago there is only one literary clique, and that one is sealed and cemented. This corset of culture stretches from the offices of the *Daily News* to *Poetry* to *Esquire,* and thence outward to Northwestern University and the University of Chicago.

Mr. Llewellyn Jones, who writes insipid books about insipid books (*How To Read,* etc.) may give a "literary" tea in the Blue Parrot Patio in Oak Park. The brahmins turn out in full force: Harriet Monroe, Eunice Tietjens, and Jessica Nelson North, all of *Poetry;* Arnold Gingrich or Meyer Levin, of *Esquire;* Sterling North and J. C. Bulliet, art critic, of the *Daily News;* Lew Sarrett, of Northwestern and *Poetry;* and Thornton Wilder, elegant novelist and pedagogue, of the University of Chicago and *Poetry.*

The next evening the brahmins may attend the meeting of the Friday Club or the Society of Midland Authors, at either of which society folk mingle with the polite writers, and once a year dole out a prize to some confused poet from Iowa or Wisconsin.

In "Our Critics, Right or Wrong," the authors warn us: "It would be pleasant to drop the matter and ignore the book columnist of the New York daily newspaper. . . . Unfortunately, he is influential; his column is scanned, at least, by millions of readers a day. It is therefore vital that we take a look at him." What is true of the New York newspaper critic is doubly true of the Chicago book critic. Chicago is, except in tradition, no longer a "literary town."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It has no magazines of its own worth reading; it has no influential or popular literary groups, radical, liberal, or progressive. Therefore it is essential that we take a look at these newspaper critics who almost completely form the reading tastes of the midwest public.

Since the dissolution of the old *Chicago Journal* and *Chicago Post* a few years ago, the *Daily News* has been the only newspaper in Chicago with an extensive book section. The *Tribune's* literary department is not nearly so elaborate or catholic. In the *Tribune's* columns, Fanny Butcher carries the brunt of the reviewing, with occasional assistance by Philip Kingsley, and a London dispatch from Frank Swinnerton. The two Hearst papers, the *American* and *Herald & Examiner,* also the tabloid *Times,* carry no reviewing.

Where can we draw the line between enthusiastic criticism and obvious blurbs? Arnold Gingrich, editor of *Esquire,* approves a blurb for a full-page ad in the daily papers:

Give a gift of *Esquire* to the "forgotten man." . . . This monthly exposure to the brilliance of *Esquire* will make him think like Einstein, talk like Noel Coward, look like Gable, dress like Wales, and act like Casanova. . . .

We should call this an absurd blurb, of course. But what does Fanny Butcher write under the guise of criticism? Miss Butcher is quite bewildered by this moving, complex world; she keeps away from dangerous topics; she makes little pretension toward being a critic, but merely a reporter of incidents and plots, a guide to trivial and entertaining fiction. Miss Butcher's keen insight is revealed in her trenchant review of *Butterfield 8* by John O'Hara:

Butterfield 8 shocks with lack of belief. Nothing is good or bad to the characters. It is about a girl who has no morals. . . . It is a shocking book. . . .

She says of *Discovery* by Richard E. Byrd:

A book that you avidly read from cover to cover . . . an almost unimaginable experience. Every line of the book fascinated me. . . .

Sterling North of the *News* gets even more excited:

A perfect Christmas gift. Fast action, suspense, and vivid descriptions. Byrd can write like nobody's business! . . .

During the World's Fair of 1934, J. C. Bulliet, art critic of the *News,* collected the more famous portraits in the Art Institute exhibit, added a monograph on each painting, and brought forth his book, *Famous Paintings in the World's Fair Exhibit.* In his columns the following week, Sterling North praised the book in no uncertain terms. But we buy the book, and at the foot of the title-page we find the bold inscription: "Published by Sterling North."

When Jessica Nelson North, one of the associate editors of *Poetry,* brought forth her anemic novel, *Arden Acres,* Sterling North took pen in hand. *Arden Acres,* he said, was a masterly work, a finely executed and significant novel. In an adjoining column, we see a large picture of Miss North gracing two columns of the *Daily News.* Jessica Nelson North is, of course, Sterling North's sister.

We know the intellectual and political calibre of *Esquire.* It has been satirized time and time again by both left- and right-wing publications. Its literary acumen can best be demonstrated by the fact that *Esquire's* book critic, Burton Rascoe, bravely asserts that he has forgotten more about literature than Robert Forsythe, Kyle Crichton, and Clifton Fadiman combined have ever known. To bolster this claim, Rascoe, ignoring the wealth of revolutionary literature in America today, picks *Jurgen* as the outstanding contribution to American literature!

We turn to the book-review section of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse. Poetry,* let it be known, is "refined"; it lists among its wealthy subscribers, who practically subsidize the muse, such women as Mrs. Francis Biddle, Mrs. Cyrus H. McCormick, and Mrs. Charles H. Swift.

We find a criticism by George Dillon, concerning "A Poet Hitherto Neglected by *Poetry Magazine.*" We glance further down the page and we see that this poet who has been "hitherto neglected by *Poetry Magazine*" is none other than Harriet Monroe, editor of said magazine. The book reviewed is *Chosen Poems: A Selection from My Books of Verse.* Now, Miss Monroe may be an astute editor, but except for a few minor pieces, has never been anything of a poet. George Dillon, who is an associate editor of *Poetry,* says of her *Chosen Poems:*

She is a poet of unusual versatility, one who has written in both traditional and experimental forms and upon many different subjects. . . . *A keen sense of social problems is revealed, but if she has any opinions upon these matters, she has not cared to express them.* . . . (Italics mine.—S.J.H.)

Try as he may, Mr. Dillon cannot do better than damn with faint praise. He is, it seems, trying to satisfy both his editor and his inner convictions. Evidently he satisfied his editor, for a few issues later, Miss Monroe is writing about Beauty—a not uncommon subject for her—and she quotes a few lines of poetry, adding, "so sings George Dillon in one of his perfect lyrics."

This mutual back-slapping is taken as a matter of course in *Poetry's* office. Miss Monroe praises Miss Tietjens's book, Miss Tietjens does the same for Mr. Sarrett, and everyone is happy. Morton D. Zabel, associate editor, alone has preserved a measure of critical integrity, and were the reins of *Poetry* in his hands, the policy of the magazine, I believe, would be different.

In a later issue of *Poetry,* Ezra Pound, the gracious fascist, sends in a fiery letter in reply to Horace Gregory's "blatantly mendacious statement" in the latter's review in the August issue. Mr. Pound, among other things, calls Mr. Gregory "an ignorant bolshevik." Miss Monroe, however, with Beauty tucked to her breast, floats serenely above this little tempest that provides the only live spark to the issue, and reveals her "keen sense of social problems" by introducing Pound's letter thus:

We make room for the following protest by Mr. Pound, though we fail to see why a *merely economic issue* should set two amiable poets by the ear.

This attitude, more than anything else, characterizes the Chicago literary brahmins' congenital frame of mind in regard to social and economic questions. Unlike the crude world of Hearst journalism, the more sophisticated orb of belles-lettres does not so much resort to stupid red-baiting, but dismisses those burning questions as "merely economic issues," as in *Poetry Magazine;* laughs them away, as in *Esquire;* ignores them, as in Miss Butcher's columns in the *Tribune;* or indiscriminately lumps both communism and fascism together, as in the columns of Sterling North in the *Daily News.*

These editors, critics, and poets may be relatively unimportant (though they are by no means insignificant) in the national literary scene; yet it is they who influence the literary tastes and opinions of millions of readers in Chicago, the Middle West, and, as in *Esquire* and *Poetry,* the entire country. It is they who obfuscate the real issues of the day with their chatter of "immortality" and "intelligent patriotism" and "beauty" and "latter-day sophistication."

SYDNEY JUSTIN HARRIS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THEATRE CHRONICLE

VERY early in the present theatrical season, two war plays came to Broadway. One was Mr. Sidney Howard's dramatization of Humphrey Cobb's excellent novel, *Paths of Glory*. The theme here was that of the butchery of common soldiers by the French high command. When it reached the boards, the actual butchery was that of Mr. Howard. Striving, evidently, to write a play which would resemble a movie scenario as closely as possible, Mr. Howard was eminently successful in ruining every potentiality in Mr. Cobb's moving story. The other war play, *If This Be Treason,* by Reverend John Haynes Holmes and Reginald Lawrence, presented the Christian cure to all evils—*a sermon*. It could have been very appropriately titled *There Is a Santa Claus,* or even better, *The Redeemer Has Arisen*. Now at the tag end of this season, we get a young playwright who achieves what older and wiser heads have failed to accomplish—a moving, impassioned, and biting anti-war play.

Mr. Irwin Shaw's one-act play, *Bury the Dead,* was originally produced by the New Theatre League, and (like *Waiting for Lefty,* by which it was apparently influenced) it became an immediate sensation; it is now appearing on Broadway under commercial auspices.

The play opens with a squad of soldiers digging graves for six privates, who fell winning a yard of bloody mud on a hill; the generals had ordered it taken. There is some bitingly ironic dialogue between the soldiers and the sergeant in command; this dialogue sets the tone for Mr. Shaw's macabre fantasy. The clergy comes to say the last prayers for the dead heroes. As a Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi simultaneously intone the prayers for the dead, the six corpses arise and refuse to allow themselves to be buried. They stand in their unfilled graves and become a national problem, even a national scandal. They are heedless to the entreaties and the philosophy of captains, generals, and doctors.

After all other appeals and efforts have failed, the women of the six corpses are called. The wives, sweethearts, mothers, and sisters of the dead soldiers come to the unfilled graves to beg their men to lie down and allow thmselves to be buried. In the interchange of conversation between the women and the corpses, the six lives of the latter are unfolded. The dreams and wishes, the hopes and attitudes, the point of view of each man are revealed. And still the dead refuse to be buried. There then follows an impressionistic ending, filled with voices, each repeating a representative and meaningful remark. The dead come out of their graves as one of the generals attempts to fill them with more lead. They march. The living—specifically, the squad of privates who have been digging their graves—march after them.

Here, by introducing an actual physical impossibility, Mr. Shaw has succeeded in attaining a heightened and impassioned sense of the horror and the meaninglessness of war. He has written a play with real meaning and importance. Nobody interested seriously in the theatre should miss seeing it—or, if that is impossible, reading it. *Bury the Dead* is one of the very few plays of the present season that has a right to survive.

Despite its vitality, its impact, and its sensational qualities, there are certain remarks which I feel must be offered. Following the presentation of this play—his first—Mr. Shaw immediately shipped out to Hollywood. He might have done himself much better if he had remained at home and rewritten his play. If the entire play were carefully rewritten and thought through, it would be much more than it already is. Here Mr. Shaw has conceived a vital theme, an interesting, if strange, manner of presenting it, and some real ideas. He has, however, failed to think them through completely. In consequence, he has bogged down and failed to finish his task. The way in which he has bogged down is the failure to integrate two strains in his play, one of realism, the other of fantasy and symbolism. The play proceeds as a gripping, macabre fantasy to the point where the women are brought onto the stage. Then, following an impressionistic and swift series of blackouts, we get six conversations, spaced one after the other. These conversations do manage to unfold information concerning the backgrounds and the pasts of the six corpses. At the same time, they snap the strain of fantasy. From symbolism, we come into naturalistic realism. The direction here, likewise, fails to help the play. Up to this point, the play has been maintained by the strange differentiation of the dead and the living. The dead hardly talk. This line of demarcation suddenly breaks own. The dead act like the living. The women nag, plead, beg, argue. In the course of these dialogues, the tense, shattering illusion which Mr. Shaw has created, snaps utterly. In consequence, some of his impact is needlessly dissipated. Had he cut these dialogues to a minimum, and had the direction been more intelligent, this snapping might have been prevented. Additionally, there is unevenness of writing in these dialogues. The last one is crude and obvious in a technical sense. A wife nags one of the corpses, telling him that all his life he has been a spineless mechanic making eighteen dollars and fifty cents a week. (On the whole, this part is reminiscent of *Waiting for Lefty*). Shrilly, the author lets her keep repeating eighteen dollars and fifty cents a week until the audience gets the point, and gets it again, and then again. Such obviousness does not help the play. It overstresses a simplicity. These criticisms notwithstanding, it is necessary to reiterate that *Bury the Dead* in an event in the theatre.

The Chicago Repertory Group, founded in 1934, has been making a gallant effort to establish a respectable drama in a city where the cultural level is largely dictated by band leaders, night club entertainers, New York columnists, and Hollywood gossip reporters. At present, they are running weekends to packed houses, their program consisting of a revue, *Innocent Bystander,* and a one-act adaptation of *The Young Go First,* adapted and directed by Charles DeSheim, from the play by Peter Martin and George Scudder. Mr. De Sheim's adaptation presents a play with rich dialogue, an authentic style in writing, and a closely knit structure. Most of the actors have had little professional training, and some of them are workers developed in this group. The results attained are more than merely encouraging. There is a real aliveness, a genuine sense of life to the production. A group of young actors playing the kids in a CCC camp reminds one of the juveniles in *Dead End*. After seeing this performance, one feels as if one had lived in a CCC camp and knew its occupants. The same cannot be said for the revue. *Innocent Bystander* is a filler, amateurish in every respect.

If the Chicago Repertory Group can struggle against the deadness and inertia which turns Chicago into an overgrown hick village, it is going to be a surprising addition to the revolutionary theatre.

JAMES T. FARRELL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

Dixie Idyll

REACTIONARY ESSAYS ON POETRY AND IDEAS, *by Allen Tate. Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.50.*

Allen Tate's new book is a crusade after lost causes which he would set up in place of the "heresies" now dominating the world. Heresies like industrialism, scientific method, revolution, social literature, atheism—in all, a longer list than the Catholic Church would draw up—are popped off by Mr. Tate like so many clay pigeons. His philosophy of reaction is much more thoroughgoing than any simple political or economic conservatism: it is an attempt to get the whole tree of modern knowledge back into the acorn. Salvation for the South lies in a stable, semi-feudal system, tied together by strong religious myths, supporting a cultural aristocracy. The North is beyond redemption.

I shall probably be doing Mr. Tate an injustice in trying to put his ideas into a coherent pattern. His book is like a seance in which ghosts mutter symbolic messages of blasphemy, benediction, and prophecy. The orderly prose, which has all the cadences of close reasoning, is deceptive, for Mr. Tate has an essentially religious mind, operating through preconceived notions of good and evil. Seldom do his conclusions have any reference to accepted facts or theories, for religious thinking is a morning haze that makes a swamp look like a still, grey lake. We know that Mr. Tate shares the prejudices and dreams of the new school of Southern agrarians who sponsor a Utopia of little, cozy households, relatively independent and secure, revelling in the joys of creative labor. But this program nowhere emerges in Mr. Tate's book; it is a kind of spiritual prompter, without which his morality play could not go on. In fact, too definite a program would probably embarrass him, because it would require a study of concrete means and ends in a practical world which must be accepted as a necessary stage in social development. But Mr. Tate wants to sneak back into the womb of the old South, and this can be accomplished only by a throwback to the child-mind of religious myth. In a world that keeps moving ahead, a consistent economics of retreat is impossible, whereas you can ride airily into the past on the back of a religious dogma. For Mr. Tate, religion is the white charger that pulls the world through history.

"The social structure," he writes, "depends on the economic structure, and economic structure is still, in spite of the beliefs of economists from Adam Smith to Marx, the secular image of religion." Hence he is afraid to expose the spirit of religion to the hard winds of reason and science. Aware that religion cannot thrive in a scientific world, Mr. Tate is opposed to the efforts of those theologians who try to effect a reconciliation. Once dogma has to be defended, it takes on the quality, claims Mr. Tate, of rationality, which is the profane property of the practical world, and religion loses the repose of pure being. To make his point, Mr. Tate splits a horse in two: one half is the use the horse can be put to, the other half is sheer horseness, that is a wonder to behold. But now we come to a strange contradiction. If religion is at the basis of social life—why should Mr. Tate and his agrarian colelagues concern themselves with social changes? Evidently, religion, like sheer horseness, doesn't work so well at times. "The Southerner," says Mr. Tate, "cannot fall back on his religion, simply because it was never articulated and organized for him." He must use politics, which is so "unrealistic and pretentious that he cannot believe in it." Finally, in desperation, Mr. Tate announces that he would gain his political end by *violence*. Apparently Mr. Tate's philosophy of reaction cannot completely cut away the practical methods and ideas of our industrial world. Nostalgia is inadequate as a program of action.

Historical law is one of the heresies Mr. Tate would exorcise. Historical laws obscure the unique qualities of cultures, events, and people. They reduce to abstractions the color and flavor of past experience. True history, according to Mr. Tate, would be a series of local sketches passing before our eyes like newsreels; and we would choose as part of our desirable tradition those we like best. The idea of historical direction seems to have escaped Mr. Tate completely. If he takes a liking to some of the qualities of the old South, he inserts them into his republic, ignoring their origin and social meaning. In the long run, his fancy is his real guide through history. But here Mr. Tate gets caught in the mesh of his own generalizations. Watch the series of abstractions he unfolds in order to transport himself into the past. A classless society, he predicts, will never come to be. And, since divisions will always exist, he prefers the rule of aristocracy to the rule of the proletariat. "Chattel slavery," says Mr. Tate, "is not demonstrably a worse form of slavery than any other on which an aristocracy may base its power and wealth." But Mr. Tate is troubled by the failure of a slave economy to produce a rich culture. The makers of culture, he believes, must have contact with the soil, and the alien Negro has not transmitted the spiritual values of the soil to the cultural aristocracy. Mr. Tate evidently thinks of the Negro as an elevator the Southern writer can take to get to the soil without dirtying his boots.

Without any theory of history other than an aversion to the "historical method" and a fondness toward the past, Mr. Tate discusses a number of poets in relation to their social *milieu*. He soon lands in the dilemma of believing that poetry is a reflection and "criticism of life," while also maintaining that poetry is "neutral" and "inutile". Whatever sensitive observations Mr. Tate makes—and there are many throughout his essays on Emily Dickinson, Hart Crane, Ezra Pound, and other contemporary poets—are constantly warped by the necessity of escaping from this dilemma. To resolve it, he prescribes unconsciousness for the poet: "the prior conditions for great poetry, given a great talent, are just two: the thoroughness of the poet's discipline in an objective system of truth, and his lack of consciousness of such a discipline." When Mr. Tate is not whetting his prejudices, he forgets the second part of this formula and makes some incisive criticism. In his discussion of E. E. Cummings, he has an effective analysis of the impasse a poet reaches when he does little more than create images of his own personality. And his characterization of Edna St. Vincent Millay as a poet of clichés, while not shockingly new, is neatly worked out. But Mr. Tate assumes the "objective system of truth" in Shakespeare and Dante, and emphasizes their unconsciousness of it. In effect, then, his formula has become a method of dodging any evaluation of meaning in a work of literature of which he approves. Mr. Tate traces the complex beliefs in Emily Dickinson, whom he considers one of the most important American poets, to the religious and intellectual background, but finds the real

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

value of her poetry in her precision and, more important, in her ability to *feel ideas*. He never questions her religious desire for "personal revelation" in relation to the themes which make up our poetic tradition. On the other hand, Emerson is taken to task for having ridden the waves of industrial progress, for being the harbinger of a social order negating the old South. It would be futile to ask Mr. Tate to be consistent, for his premises preclude consistency.

On Hart Crane, Mr. Tate runs the full gamut of his contradictions. He makes a valid criticism of *The Bridge*—that Crane's symbol of the bridge does not have adequate associations in the social context, hence its meaning is as dispersive as a cloud—a valid criticism, but his reasons for this criticism run him into the ground. No myth, claims Mr. Tate, can unify the folk-ways of American life. And Crane's search for one to symbolize the direction of our civilization came from his innocence of American history. Here Mr. Tate quarrels with a poet's intentions and beliefs. Crane is committing a heresy in seeking, however vaguely, a new way of life. But Eliot is granted a natural right to his caustic poetry of pessimism. And Mr. Tate can even manage to appreciate the poetry of John Peale Bishop, who, God knows, has no perceptions of any importance, by extolling his metrical skill. Since his social criticism flutters on the breezes of his prejudices, Mr. Tate's formal criticism cannot be integrated with it, and he constantly shuttles from one to the other. Mr. Tate makes a distinction between a "poetry of the will" and a "poetry of the imagination," in order to discredit those social assertions in literature with which he is not in sympathy. The poets Mr. Tate approves of—Shakespeare and Dante—wrote a poetry of the imagination. They were at peace with their environment. Although nourished by it, they cannot be judged by the beliefs they assimilated. Their actual poetic statements are neither "true nor false". A poetry of the will, on the other hand, is a poetry of revolt, containing assertions of the poet's political ideals. Mr. Tate, following the fashion set by Eliot, ascribes the gaudiness of some of Shelley's poetry to his political convictions, to his having written a poetry of the will.

After these rationalizations are torn away, what remains of Mr. Tate's poetic criticism? Some stray insights, a medley of social prejudices, and a metrical approach to poems. Theoretically, Mr. Tate's position leaves no way to a consistent social and esthetic judgment of poetry, because he sees no relation between the meaning of a poem and the social meanings of a historical period.

Hence you rarely feel, when reading his essays on poetry, that you are on a train of ideas headed for some destination. Apt observations are wiped out by qualifying statements which put you on the track of an opposing theory.

It doesn't look as though Mr. Tate will ever learn that you can't tread the earth and walk a tight-rope at the same time.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Variety

A TIME TO DANCE, *by C. Day Lewis. Random House.* $1.75.

"Curiosity," says Day Lewis, "is, I suppose, the most dangerous and the most vital of all human virtues." Perhaps Day Lewis is not far wrong; perhaps for the moment we can agree that he is right, that curiosity is a good if not too serious human motive, and that he has braced himself upright to answer questions. Granting this, I prefer to think that he has animated his prose and verse by the creation of a character, a composite portrait of himself and others—the new English poet, a young man who has assumed the duty of re-instructing a bitter, faithless, rotting social organism, a post-war world. The character is, of course, still incomplete; he is a "Work In Progress," fated, like all of us, to grow old, perhaps to die in the next war, or worst of all, to exist within a kind of living death that too often surrounds the poet as he enters middle age—the fate of excellent talkers like Coleridge—or the obsession of grandeur covering Wordsworth like a pall.

Given such a poet who is not speaking for himself alone, but for himself as well as others, the present book is further proof of generous intentions. The essay, "Revolution in Writing," is a sequel to the earlier prose, "A Hope For Poetry"; the poem, "A Time To Dance," extends the purpose of "The Magnetic Mountain", and the play, a choral ballet not intended for the stage, follows the precedent of Auden's "Paid on Both Sides", which was an experiment in dramatic form, neither play nor poem, but a charade.

If we agree that we are listening to the voice of a spokesman for Day Lewis (rather than Day Lewis himself, or Spender, or Auden) we can then hear what he has to say with reasonable detachment. His ultimate desires are well in view: in the near future rises the hope of a new poetic myth, a myth which includes the use of machine imagery (tractor and automobile, radio and airplane) and at the end of its progress the vision of a classless society. Toward this end the poet is drawn as surely as though he were attracted by the invisible forces of electromagnetism. Among his desires (though these may be retarded by indecision, by his physical existence within a hostile society) is the hope of retaining a sound body and clean mind. He is conscious of writing revolutionary literature, yet he seems to force his will toward communism; and though the germ of his revolutionary desire is genuine, its hothouse growth is less actual than the germ itself.

Because the spokesman is near the center of controversy in contemporary literature, we have much to learn from him. His merits, his personal sacrifices are so obvious that his gestures are scarcely short of the heroic; but such a poet is not likely to know his limitations: he is likely to mistake the future as accomplished fact, to prove, against his will, that his intellect has a swifter pace than his emotions. That is why, I think, Day Lewis's abilities remain potentials of a sensitive imagination (read the shorter lyrics in the present volume); that is why I believe his haste endangers his more ambitious poems, which at their worst, are merely thin and repetitious.

"The Revolution In Literature" originated as a speech by radio; and it was written to be heard by the English middle-class professionals: the college instructor, the young writer who has not read Marx, young advertising men, young journalists—and even young businessmen who have wearied of the pose of seeming cynical. To the American communist, this speech may seem naive or dangerously Platonic. He is likely to forget that Day Lewis's spokesman has the kind of Liberal heritage that permits free speech in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoons. It is a heritage that can allow for contradictions, like "His Majesty's Communist Government," a phrase that must sound strange to all Americans. It explains, I think, Day Lewis's happy definition of politics (one that seems unreal on this side of the Atlantic);

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it is so simple, so plausible: "the science of living together." It seems to come directly from a dictionary of eighteenth century rationalism; and from that phrase we see a roomful of men talking *reasonably* with one another. When we read: "where living together has become difficult and painful, the writer turns to the science of living together," the room in which the discussion is taking place seems filled with fresh air and morning light. I wonder what a New York or Chicago politician would think of it, I wonder how a civil war Dubliner would respond to any definition of that kind. Day Lewis's essay recalls the atmosphere of Shelley's notes and letters; its last statement, "Evolution Is the dance, revolutions are the steps," might well have been written by Shelley, had he read Darwin and then studied with his usual diligence *Das Kapital*.

It so happens that Day Lewis is not unwise in stressing the evolutionary elements in dialectical materialism. His English audience will recall almost subconsciously the name of Marx as Darwin's contemporary; they will remember that Marx walked the streets of London and that today one may visit his grave in Hampstead, that sober, not unpleasant Victorian neighborhood of stone-front houses and green back gardens.

The essay, however, tends to over-simplify the entire problem of revolutionary writing; and here one reads such truisms as: "Any good poem, simply because every good poem is a true statement of the poet's feelings, is bound to be of value: it gives us insight into the state of mind of a larger or smaller group of people." One has the unquiet conviction that a spokesman is *talking down* to his audience, assuming as he does so, that all poetry is so widely unread that no one remembers its primary definitions.

Perhaps the role of spokesman has not been completely fortunate for Day Lewis's welfare, particularly in America, where his prose and verse have been bound together in two single volumes. It makes him appear a shade too eager to explain away difficult passages in his own verse; he is made to seem always on the defensive, hastily writing both prose and verse against the speed of time and change. "Noah and the Waters" is the least successful poem Day Lewis has written in five years. To see the masses of people as a flood rising to wipe clean the ruins of a dead civilization is symbolism with a vengeance—vengeance that is inanimate and inexact to the very edges of pathetic fallacy. One knows only too well what is about to happen, and when the voices from the flood call out, "Waters of the world unite," the worst has happened even beyond our usual expectations. The trouble with the poem is its irrefutable logic, a logic of a kind that entered Victorian poetry and destroyed it; it is too good (and I suspect too simple) to be true.

"A Time To Dance" is a far better poem (though best of all are those short lyrics, "The Conflict" and "In Two Worlds"); here there is airplane flight and satire of the world below; it is not until the latter half of the poem that the lines sag into inept parody and false jazz rhythms. And here at last I am reminded again of Shelley. I am not saying this in dispraise of Shelley's best work or in dispraise of all his political poems, some of which will remain among the best in revolutionary literature. Shelley at his worst, however, stepped out into the thin mid-air of prophecy; his logic was correct, yet the poetry itself had become intangible, unreal. Something of the same defeat seems to endanger Day Lewis's longer poems. It is not enough to say that some of the passages within them are carelessly written, and other passages excellently phrased; the danger lies deeper than that. Poetic logic is the logic of human emotion; should the poet travel too far beyond the range of his experience, his way is lost, his images lose force and his vitality is dissipated. It is better for Day Lewis to remember that he inhabits (as he knows well) two worlds. Let the confidence that he has gained extend his courage in making a further record of:

The priest asking for silence the soldier asking for trouble:
the politician for ten per cent; the traitor for a kiss;
the lover for a steel whip; the teacher for instructions.

HORACE GREGORY

BREAK THE HEART'S ANGER, *by Paul Engle. Doubleday, Doran.* $2.50.

Break the Heart's Anger has some of the faults of *American Song;* but Paul Engle has a better theme this time; we can see that he has been places and has seen things. I respect and wish to praise a young poet whose courage sends him so swiftly in the revolutionary direction. It is also necessary to try to say what it is that hinders him, with the most ardent will in the world toward magnificent utterance, from writing the poem he set out to write. I can see shadows of that great poem on nearly every page; I have marked my review copy and re-read passages for two weeks in an attempt to get at the bottom of its very great lack. Here are some of the difficulties:

First of all, there are too many abstract words in the poetic passages. There are too many favorite words repeated as stop-gaps, when the great passage begins to run thin. Part of this is inevitable; Engle has come out of America for good, and he writes not only of this planet, but of the universe. Pretty hard to keep that up for long, or to say anything very explicit or very passionate or very human about the cosmos. But Engle tries over and over:

Now in the running body of lean space
Hangs the world like an enormous heart
Beating through arteries of light the pulse
Of day and dark, that is the pulse of man . . .

Next, together with the favorite words is a repetition of clusters of sound and beats to the line, and this, with the abstract words, builds up an effect of great monotony. The lines scan mechanically—when read with the sense accent, they lose their rhythm. This is never so in a good poet. Engle is too fond of the word *dream* and *dreaming*—all fair and desirable things of the future are associated with dream, so that the word is constantly getting into a line for that reason, and also for the sake of sound, with other humming, M-like words. We cease to respond. The stimulus is too simple.

On the memory and the dribblings of a dream.
And spent it in a dime store of mad dreams, etc.

Now we come to the concrete passages. They are bitter—in lingo. For instance:

America, bastard child from all the world
Born, yet parentless, hard scrapper beating
Your lone way out from a child into a man,
It is not strange you were cocky, forever carried
A chip on your shoulder, boasted the length of the earth
You are one tough baby, hard as nails, swaggering
The streets with chin stuck out and a grin, shouting,
Take a poke at that, kid, if you're looking for trouble,
I'm half mountain lion, half Texas steer,
With a dash of rattlesnake and horned toad, taking
Easily in one jump and a yell the land

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From the Blue Ridge to the Big Horns, and wearing
The whole damn Mississippi for a belt.
I'll pull my right shoe off and kick the moon
Clean over God's left shoulder for good luck.
I'm the world's original playboy—look me over.

But many concrete passages are not as good as this. They fall a little flat; they are not as exuberant as the talk in *Huckleberry Finn,* or in the tall tales of the South and the West. And they should have more heat and wild gab in them, because they are poetry, not prose. If the poetic passages had more splendor and the homely passages this peculiar gift of gab that Engle feels and cannot quite cut loose with, we should be well on the way to the great poem.

But I'm still unsatisfied with something that goes a little deeper than power over language. Engle is ardent in his Communist sympathies. But his mind and heart are so ardent that he skips some of the intellectual re-making that a middleclass person must undergo before he can write the poetry that expresses the qualities of Communism. This poetry is, rightly understood, an old-style revolutionary romantic indignation at hunger, injustice, waste, exploitation, war. He is right to honor his own American past; it has given him this all too rare indignation. We might put it this way: he feels the way Jack Reed felt before he went to jail. For instance, he writes passages about Tom Mooney, about the General Strike in San Francisco. And this excellent distinction between the picturesque bum and the unemployed worker:

We have always
Had the hard-boiled cadgers, the old timers
Who'd made a racket of it all their lives,
The tramps and hobos who in any time
Would have been the moochers with the snarling whine,
The scorning bums who hopped the fastest freights,
The fly-by-nights riding the rods to hell,
The down-and-outers scared of death and work. . . .
Inheritors of wind and hills for home,
The railroad jungle and the can of stew,
The westward moving of a nation fled
Into their blood, the last Americans
Going forever onward without end
Fearing but the black ash of last night's fire,
To sleep in the same bed, a steady job,
Forty-niners of the railway ties
Or hitting the highway with a hard-luck yarn.
These are of the land, they are a part of it.
But all the millions who are on the street,
Only a few years footloose—wandering
From town to town and corner to street corner,
The trained minds loafing on the curb or taking
Jobs a kid could do, at a kid's wage,
Youngsters just out of school, the men with hands
Quicker than thought, skillful at long-learned trades,
These are the tough reality, it is
Their voice that cries at night.

But by our new values, Engle seems verbose and muddled. That old word *dream* comes to mind again. There are many hard words and ruthless images, effects of daring and power; but the verse itself is not hard or compact or clear, except in flashes and bits.

In the last section, "Epilogue at the Core of Earth," Engle says several things that explain this to me.

Lean heart of man, born for tragedy
Doomed but to break . . .

he says. And suddenly I understand the recurrent images of crucifixion, the repeated picture of Christ, the poet's own heart offered to the world, and I begin to see what ails the thought of this book, what trips it up from the strength it might have, why it is so *frenzied.*

You have a future as a poet of the people, Paul Engle. But great times demand great powers.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD

THANKSGIVING BEFORE NOVEMBER, *by Norman Macleod. Parnassus Press.* $2.00.

Macleod's book is divided into three parts—one related to his youth; the second to his years as a self-conscious poet; the third dealing with conditions and events of the class struggle. No direct narrative is intended, there being little continuity from poem to poem. There is, however, much repetition of mood and considerable sameness of experience, while the second period of his life has produced a style of expression which permeates the entire book.

It would not be very valuable to say that this style is unfortunate. In a poet whose every lyric is a form of self-revelation, style becomes a document of personal history. His adjectives are a clue to his way of thinking. Macleod's lack of poetic objectivity is so pronounced that his poems do not even describe his mind: they really betray it.

Weakness in discipline mars all but a few of the poems. The poet is unable to control his images, and their profusion dissipates whatever intensity they may possess. Very often they are only conceits. The opening line of the first poem introduces one:

The onion skin of our thoughts was transparent as dawn
In clear weather

Another, of the pueblo Indians:

Their eyes are sabrepoints of a tiger
In the dawn of a slow sunset of tears.

It may be assumed from these examples that there are few poems which have any consistent imagery. Within twenty lines a mood changes its clothing four or five times—for ice, the desert, underwater, and the atmosphere of various abstractions.

Few of the poems are true lyrics, but rather a mixture of mood and meditation. There is a tendency to generalize the most ordinary experiences, to pump them up with afterthoughts. But these are entirely conditioned by mood and last as long and no longer than the mood.

It must not be thought that Macleod is unaware of the instability of his resolutions, the transient quality of his ideas. He seems to have been beset by such knowledge throughout his life. Cities have been too much for him. They make him overrate the rural, or rather primeval virtues in a rawly romantic way:

There together,
With children growing, splitting the tamarack
And treasuring bacon: the fir cone flavoring
The yoke of food. Whiskey, cow, and deer,
Hedgehogs: the sunshine and radiance of snow!
The soil beneath us and the sodded roof above.

or

Again we would like to walk
In the freedom of rain,
Flesh deluged, uncaring for cold
That would give once more
A correspondence with heritage
Of race and the soil.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The whiskey is assumed to be homemade: "race and the soil" sounds as though it came from a man who wishes he could plow the ground with his voice. It is in character that his most successful country poems describe activities whose pleasures may be enjoyed best in childhood or on trips, like "Fishing in Summer."

In the city there is nothing but
Stereopticans of skyscrapers lusting the sky
while the world at large is no better, for
Without kindness
Airplanes circle the universe.

No wonder his moods easily achieve the death of his ideas. He was just coming back from the Soviet Union, and as the boat left shore:

It seemed clear that life would last
Forever, separate in its final body,
Free of sufferance. Until the last ship
Beat horizon, the thought remained:
It weathered out beyond Finland,
Forgotten upon the Swedish coast.

Honest but unhappy traveler.

However, in the third section, "Communications from the Revolution," whenever Macleod gets away from under the habitual rhetoric of the earlier poems, he becomes swifter, more controlled, simpler, capable of narrative—in short, a better poet. But for this poetic victory to be assured, vigilance and action are required in other fields beside that of his craft.

CLARENCE WEINSTOCK

CORRESPONDENCE

Sanctions Against Williams

To the Editors:

I found the symposium on "What is Americanism?" in your April issue stimulating. It's good to see many of the best American writers knocking down the bogey of opposition between America's past and its Marxian future. Robert Herrick, I think, is very sincere but has not kept pace with the march of events. Dreiser is his old blundering self, vigorous and forthright; and, as ever, he smacks hard at reaction. The only one who seems to have set out to make an ass of himself is William Carlos Williams. Where has the man been living all these years? You might think America never had its Federalist and later its Whig parties, and now its Liberty League, not to mention the Republicans and Democrats. How about slavery, which it took a bloody war to get rid of, Mr. Williams? He can't see economic facts behind the official myths of liberalism and democracy. The "good humor" that he sees as the essence of Americanism is about as scientific a notion as blood-letting is to modern medicine. If the American masses have so far, as he claims, not taken to revolutionary literature, they are even less aware of Mr. Williams' particular brand of poetry. In fact, the whole school of modernist writing of which Mr. Williams is such a shining light has made no dent on the American consciousness. The picture of America that Mr. Williams is trying to sell us is a tintype of reaction. But in your symposium Josephine Herbst, Newton Arvin and Joseph Freeman have indirectly refuted his ideas much more effectively than I could.

San Francisco, Cal. CHARLES FORREST

[*Editorial note*: Space does noet permit the publication in this issue of the numerous other letters commenting on the symposium which we have received. The letters reflect a lively interest in the subject, which accounts, perhaps, for the spirited exceptions taken in most of them to William Carlos Williams' point of view. His "uninformed notions of Marxism and Americanism," to quote from one letter, are roundly condemned by most of the correspondents. Needless to say, the editorial position of PARTISAN REVIEW is utterly opposed to the direction of thought shown in Mr. Williams' contribution.]

From a Young Man

To the Editors:

On one occasion in the past I first came across the magazine, PARTISAN REVIEW, and was delighted at so fine a publication. It is with no less gratification that I read the March issue of the present ocmbined magazine.

As one new to the general literary trends I find that your magazine is an excellent source of guidance and stimulation. I want particularly to understand and appreciate proletarian literature and I believe there is a great number of young persons like me who are in need of help in being guided toward a consciousness of the significance and value of such works.

Alan Calmer's article on the controversy over Marxist literature is an example of the kind of material I think to be extremely helpful. Mr. Bradford's *Blue With White Dots* leaves one feeling as though he had sat on the porch with the cannery workers that cool evening. I liked it very much.

One story impressed me particularly and that was *The Runners* by Prudencio de Pereda. His style resembles rather notably that of Ernest Hemingway, possessing in addition a definite Spanish flavor.

The section on poetry contained several interesting pieces, especially Kenneth Fearing's, *Never, Never, Never,* with its rushing, run-on style. I am looking forward to future issues of your magazine for the reasons I've indicated above. Meanwhile, my best wishes for its continued success.

Brooklyn, N. Y. MICHAEL GARRAMONE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED